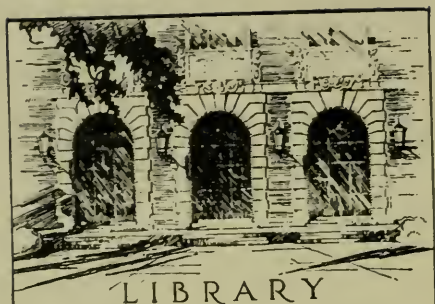

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THE

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

THE

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

A NOVEL.

BY

THE AUTHORESS OF THE

DIARY OF A DÉSENNUYÉE.

herine Grace Frances (Moody) Gore

" O matter and impertinency mix'd !"

SHAKSPEARE.

THREE VOLUMES.

VOL I.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1838.

WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

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English

PREFACE.

After two years of strict seclusion at Hartston Abbey, the *Désennuyée* emerges once more into the sunshine of the gay world! The torpid chrysalis into which, in her rural retreat, the gay butterfly was transformed, has by an inversion of the laws of nature, become a butterfly again; fluttering anew among the gaudy parterres of that singularly ugly portion of the creation which calls itself the *beau monde*. To deposit among their roses and lilies the offspring of her leisure, is the harmless purpose of her ephemeral existence. From the violence of the summer shower, she creeps for shelter

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BINDING DEPT.
MAY 16 '32

under a laurel-leaf; while against human assailants, her fragile nature is her defence.

Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?—*Who* attacks with needless severity a frivolous insect,—a

> Gay being born to flutter through the air—
> To-day to sparkle, and to-morrow die?

Dropping, however, my wings and my metaphor, be it the first duty of the Désennuyée to acknowledge with gratitude, the kindness with which the diary of her adventures and sentiments were received by the world. Favour renders many bold, but some timid; and it is not without hesitation I follow up the history of my own life with an "own true tale," regarding two interesting families, my neighbours at Hartston Abbey; which, disguising their names and titles, they have empowered me to offer as a lesson to the giddy circles of the metropolis.

Such is the origin of my sketch of "A Woman of the World." The picture is true to nature,—(i. e. to fashionable nature;) but, as the world does not always, like Satan, take

care of its own, the portrait may be disowned and reviled by the original or originator.

The coteries of the day differ in fact more extensively than they are aware of from the coteries of yesterday, in which figured the flighty Mrs. Delaval. The splendid year 1838, with its crowns and sceptres, stars and garters, heralds and helter-skelter hopes and promises, is an era of deeper interest than its sallow, pensive, desponding elder sister; and as the human mind is roused to a more active exercise of its powers by the conflict of stirring events, the London of this passing month is not to be trifled with!—James* may put a pistol to its breast and bid it "stand and deliver," or Cooper embark its attention in a seventy-four, but my implement of destruction is a paltry sky rocket, and the gay pinnace of the Désennuyée, with youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm, may perhaps be wrecked in the offing.

My last lucubrations were addressed to a mild, somnolent, easy-chair sort of public, taking breath and a nap after the Reform Bill. *Mais nous*

* Author of "The Robber."

avons changé tout cela. England is wide awake. What Talleyrand called "*le commencement de la fin,*" and even Talleyrand himself, is merged in the dust of centuries; and we have attained "*le commencement d'un commencement,*" an epoch of brightness, joy, and consummation. Autumn and Winter have departed, and Spring and Summer lie before us. We are beginning to be merry as well as wise,—the best result perhaps of wisdom:—

The hour now promises unto this land a thousand thousand blessings which time shall bring to ripeness!

Still, amid its mirth and rejoicing, may the public find a picktooth hour for pages light and fearless as its present mood; and a rival to the brilliancy of the bench of peeresses, in the attractions of "A Woman of the World."

H. HARTSTON.

Arlington Street,
June 15, 1838.

THE

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

Du nom de vertueux serez vous honoré
Doux et discret Cyrus, en vous-même concentré ;
Honnête homme indolent, qui, dans un doux loisir,
Loin du bien et du mal, vivez pour votre plaisir?—

VOLTAIRE.

THERE is no state of obscurity more obscure, and perhaps none of mortal enjoyment more enjoyable than the condition of a country baronet of respectable connexions and competent means.

Sir William Helmsley, of Helmsley Abbey, with an income such as his butler might be excused for representing to his brother butlers as "five thousan' a year," and a handsome house situated in one of the woodland districts of Northamptonshire, though never heard of out of his own county, and rarely out of his own parish, had every motive that a reasonable mind can suggest for the fervency of his gratitude to Providence. A good constitution—good person—good temper—good fortune—good family—good wife—good reputation—good standing in the world: such were the qualities and qualifications which his worst enemy could not deny to Sir William. Yet, strange to relate, his maternal uncle, Lord Shropshire (lord-lieutenant of a neighbouring county and a whister of thirty years' renown at White's), never spoke of him but as a lost man!

"My nephew?"—he used to say, in reply to inquiries after the son of old Sir Robert. "Oh! poor Helmsley is completely done for!—Helmsley has placed an extinguisher upon himself.—Helmsley will never be heard of again;—lives entirely at his country place—kills his own mutton—receives his own rents—dotes upon his own wife—and educates his own children. I offered to bring him into parliament at the last dissolution; but he thanked me, and told me by way of answer that Lady Helmsley was not fond of London."

And such was the exact position of the country baronet. He was so fortunate as to have found a companion who agreed with him in preferring a life of usefulness to a life of show; who never tormented him with sighing after a house in May Fair, or falling into a fit of the sullens when she saw their neighbours depart to London for the season. Lady Helmsley,

the daughter of a Northamptonshire squire of his own level in fortune and family, shared in all his prejudices and predilections; there was not even the trifling jealousy of county rivalship to create dissension between them. They agreed in thinking Europe the favoured quarter of the globe—England the favoured country of Europe; Northamptonshire the best county in England, and Helmsley Abbey the most eligible spot in Northamptonshire. It has already been admitted, that Sir William thought Lady Helmsley the first of women; and her ladyship fully returned the compliment in favour of the fortunate Sir William.

A man must have been indeed fastidious, not to prove an adoring husband to the lovely and gifted Marcella. Not that Lady Helmsley was either a professed beauty or a professed wit; but every turn of her countenance was attractive, every word of her lips persuasive.

Endowed with the only art that can be called akin to nature, the art of pleasing, her influence over her husband was unbounded.

Such were the causes which induced Lord Shropshire to decide that "poor Helmsley had placed an extinguisher on himself." When the noble uncle, visiting at Helmsley Abbey, suggested the removal of a village which was planted out at a considerable expense of prospect to the park, Sir William replied that Marcella liked it to be there; and when he proposed making acquaintance for them with the family of Lord Colebrooke, who was just returned from a residence on the continent, and settled at Woodlands, a seat about thirty miles distant, Marcella answered that she considered the distance too great for country visiting. It was in vain Lord Shropshire observed, in a somewhat reproving tone, that the Colebrookes ranked among the first people

in the kingdom; that, in consequence of the recent change of ministry, or rather the revolution of European politics, Lord Colebrooke was likely to obtain an eminent post in the administration; and that when, at some future time, Sir William should enter into public life ("as I conclude," observed his lordship with peculiar emphasis, "will be the case"), the friendship of such a man might be invaluable.

Replying to Lord Shropshire's parenthesis in preference to any other clause of his oration, Lady Helmsley presumed to answer in the name and behalf of her husband, that Sir William had not the remotest intention of entering into public life.

"Indeed!" cried Lord Shropshire, rising from his chair, and assuming before the fire an attitude peculiar to English gentlemen, and amazing to the gentlemen of every other civi-

lized country who describe it as bitterly as Mrs. Trollope describes the Iriquoisisms of the Yankees—"Then I fear I did my duty as a guardian very negligently, to have rendered my nephew so little sensible of *his* duty to the country."

Sir William, who had retreated to the window during the discussion of the Colebrooke question which he felt privileged to leave in the hands of his wife, returned to the hearth-rug and the argument, the moment his consistency was called in question.

"You surely do not think," said he, addressing his uncle, "that my stake in the country is of sufficient magnitude to make it incumbent on me to get into parliament?—Consider how limited are my fortune and estate, compared with those of twenty men of property I could name in the county!"

"They have not your family connexion,"

replied Lord Shropshire, in a tone implying, "Your mother was sister to an earl."

"Family connexions, I fear, would scarcely extend my credit with my banker sufficiently to defray the expenses of a town establishment," replied Sir William.

"Perhaps not. But they may so far tend to advance you in life, as to double your income by means of a good appointment."

"I have no ambition to become a place-man," replied Sir William, calmly. "Marcella and I are happy as we are. Had I been born with hereditary rank or hereditary fortune of sufficient extent to make it my duty to stand forward, I trust I should have found courage to do so. As it is, my sphere is limited."

"The more reason that it should be extended!—It was sufficient boast for the rulers of ancient times, that they found a city mud, and left it marble. A man in these days does

some honour to his pedigree, who is born a baronet and dies a peer."

"That must depend on the means by which his peerage is achieved," observed Lady Helmsley, concealing as she bent over her work a smile provoked by the bathos of the simile.

"You do not I hope, madam, consider the service of the country a dishonourable road to promotion?"—demanded Lord Shropshire, hastily.

"By no means!—But when the road is sufficiently filled, I see no reason why those engaged in domestic avocations should resign them in order to jostle against others in an overstocked career."

"And may I presume to inquire into the nature of my nephew's avocations?"—demanded Lord Shropshire, glancing contemptuously at the shooting-jacket in which Sir William had been about to proceed to his morning's sport,

when stopped by his noble kinsman's proposition of a sweeping demolition of Helmsley village.

"Hush—hush—my dear Marcella!" cried the young baronet, playfully closing the lips of Lady Helmsley, as she was about to enter upon his vindication. "For Heaven's sake do not bring down Lord Shropshire's judgment upon the nonentityship of country gentlemen, by insisting upon farming and the quorum, parish business or justice business. I know he will be kind enough to give me up as an incorrigible Sir Clod, when I admit my belief that my duty to the country is limited within the confines of Northamptonshire, as completely as my happiness is bounded within the park palings of Helmsley Abbey."

And while Lord Shropshire shrugged his shoulders in all that plenitude of pity with which a fine gentleman looks down on a country

cousin, Lady Helmsley's eye wandered from her work to the intelligent manly countenance of her husband, and thence to the well-stored shelves of the library where they were sitting. She knew that while Lord Shropshire despised the vulgarity of their rustic pursuits, they found as much pleasure in studying together the beauties of Bacon or Bolingbroke, Dante, Goethe, Herder or Filicaja, as his lordship in winning the odd trick, or exhibiting his blue ribbon in the mob of stars and garters at the levee.

Both children were satisfied with their toys! —The green mould upon a cheese furnishes to the contemplation of a mite, forests of verdure as high as the gigantic trees which some Indian jungle or African wilderness places before the eyes of an elephant.—*Reste à savoir* whether the Earl or Baronet can claim the higher illustration!

CHAPTER II.

The world denies that thou art fair,
So, dearest, let it be,
If nought in loveliness compare
With what thou art to me.
True beauty dwells in deep retreats,
Whose veil is but removed
When heart with heart in concord beats
Both loving and beloved.

WORDSWORTH.

THE happiness of Helmsley Abbey was not often invaded by the intrusion of titled relatives. The unaspiring couple were left for the most part to enjoy themselves in their own way; to ride together, walk together, see with their own eyes and hear with their own ears the progress

effected in the village by the fruition of their schemes of benevolence; return home for a stroll in the flower-garden, a game at billiards, or a duet of harp and flute, of which no carping philharmonic critic was at hand to detect the imperfections. Sir William gave an hour every morning to little Harry; and Mary passed more than three times that space of time on a little stool beside her mother's work-table. The days of the two idle people were, in short, very fully filled up. Lady Helmsley attended to her village school, while Sir William was busy in his plantations; and they met again after a few hours absence, with as much delight as if weeks had divided them from each other.

Lady Helmsley's pleasures and duties, however, were not wholly confined to the Abbey. The eldest of her family, her early marriage had been a considerable loss to the household of her widowed father; and on Mr. Wroughton's

death about two years afterwards, the care of her sister Emma, a girl of twelve, had fallen to her share; just as the guardianship of her only brother fell to that of Sir William. Young Wroughton, who had lately been emancipated from tutelage by attaining his majority, was now on his travels; but Emma was still at a school in the neighbourhood of London, at which the old gentleman had made it his dying request she might complete her education.

For her brother and sister, Lady Helmsley felt the tenderest and most mother-like interest. She longed for the time when Emma would come home to reside with her and afford her a female companion at the Abbey; and Gerald settle for life at Wroughton Hall, and secure to Sir William a neighbour after his own heart, in his ward and brother-in-law.

Let those who are enjoying what ought to be a state of perfect contentment, beware how

they presume to *long* for any thing!—It is tempting Providence to admit a wish ungratified. Hope was intended to be the solace of the unhappy; it becomes a crime when unlawfully assumed by the prosperous. Were not the fact, that—

Man never is, but always to be blest,

the indication of an instinct vouchsafed to the human race to foreshow the immortality of the soul, our restless aspiration after future bliss might be regarded as a fatal drawback upon the happiness of life.

For when the period arrived for Gerald Wroughton to settle at Wroughton Hall, and Emma to be installed under the protection of her sister, the first exclamation of each to the other on their arrival at the Abbey, was—"How ill Marcella is looking!"—

In the course of a few weeks, this first ex-

pression of anxiety deepened into "How strange that Sir William does not see how much she is altered!"—and when, at the expiration of a few weeks more, Emma observed her sister silently avoid all occasions of personal exertion, that she seized on any excuse to evade her daily ride, and would rise from her harp before the piece was half concluded which they had commenced together, she could no longer refrain from mentioning to her brother-in-law the first time they were alone together, her apprehensions that Marcella was becoming seriously indisposed.

"Seriously indisposed?" cried the Baronet, with a smile. "You are not so much accustomed to watch her as I am. Marcella is recovering from a severe cold; and while it was on her, nothing could prevent her sitting two hours a day in that damp schoolhouse."

"I do not think she *is* recovering from her cold,—I think she is still suffering severely from its effects," replied the plain-spoken Emma.

"She is always pale and thin in the spring of the year," rejoined the unpersuadable Sir William.

"But she is not always affected by that hectic cough, which leaves her not a moment's peace!" persisted the affectionate sister.

"Hectic cough,—*hectic?*" cried Sir William, starting up, with horror impressed on every feature. "You surely do not mean,—you surely do not think,—it is impossible—quite impossible—you should fancy——" and while his quivering lips refused to complete the sentence, his eyes were filled with tears which prevented his reading an answer in the looks of his sister-in-law.

Had he plainly discerned the countenance of Emma Wroughton, he would have seen that

she did fear the worst. But his own heart already suggested sufficient apprehensions.

"I will send off immediately for Fitton!" cried he. "Good God! my dear Emma, why did you not suggest this before?—Fitton must see her in the course of the day.—I shall not rest till I have heard Fitton's opinion."

"But will it not alarm my sister to have medical advice so suddenly forced upon her?" suggested Miss Wroughton. "Could not Dr. Fitton say that he called in accidentally, as he was in the neighbourhood of the Abbey?"

"No!" replied Sir William. "Marcella and I have never used arts or concealments with each other. What passes in *my* mind, passes naturally into hers."

"But for *her* sake!" persisted Emma. "I have always heard that persons affected as I believe her to be, ought above all things to be kept in ignorance of their danger."

"Do not say *danger!*" exclaimed Sir William, shuddering. "I cannot even bear to hear that word applied to my wife."

"Yet you are not afraid to hazard the intimation to herself!"

"No! for Marcella has twice as much courage—as much fortitude—as I have. You know not what strength of character lies concealed under her serenity of disposition."

"If there were but half as much vigour in her constitution!" ejaculated Emma. "But we have lost time enough already. Go and despatch your note to Northampton, and *I* will prepare my sister for the visit. To say the truth, I think she has long wished for advice."

"Anxious about herself, and never own it to me!" cried William.

"Marcella was more scrupulous, perhaps, about alarming *you* than—"

But she had no time to finish the reproach which the egotism of husband-nature was about to extort from her lips. Sir William was already off to the stables, to bid White Surrey be saddled, and his confidential groo m despatched in search of the family physician.

CHAPTER III.

And when the hour of sickness came
To warn us of a coming blow,
Till, as we watched her wasted frame,
Our steps grew hush'd, our voices low ;
We had not guessed what auguries
Might in the sufferer's bosom be,
But for the tearful, wistful eyes,
With which she used to gaze on *thee !*

VANE.

LATE as the oracle was invoked, the decree came only too soon for the attached family of Lady Helmsley. So much pains were taken by the worthy doctor to impress upon the

mind of the husband that he was not *altogether* without hope, that Sir William had sense enough to discern the desperateness of the case.

His eyes once opened, all became clearly apparent. The mother of Marcella had fallen an early victim to consumption; two sisters, intervening in age between herself and Emma, had fallen victims to the same insidious complaint; and the motive of Gerald Wroughton's journey to Italy the preceding year, was a professional suggestion that the young man would do well to winter in a milder climate. A similar sentence would now have been pronounced upon Lady Helmsley, according to the usual practice of physicians of sending their patients to die in other hands, but that spring instead of winter was coming on. The medical synod, assembled to decide upon her case, decreed that Helmsley Abbey (situated on an eminence

upon a fine gravelly soil), was damp; and that her ladyship was likely to benefit by change of air and scene. A choice was left between the seaside and London; when Sir William, eager to ensure the best professional advice, decided in favour of the latter.

In London, therefore, in a quiet house in Upper Harley Street, they settled for the season; and Lord Shropshire's first exclamation on meeting his nephew accidentally in Pall Mall, was—"Aha! my patience has not been much tried!—I knew we should have you at last. But Lady Helmsley seemed so positive, that I did not fancy it would be so soon. Give me your arm up St. James's Street. Do you go to the levee to-morrow?—Where are you in town?—By the way, there is a vacancy at Arthurs, where I put you up five years ago.—What do you think of trying it?"

Replying by rational gradation to these nu-

merous interrogatories, Sir William made it as apparent to his inattentive kinsman as the rumble of passing drays would admit, that while others came to town to anoint themselves with the oil of gladness, to enjoy the best dinners with their worst friends and the worst dinners at the best clubs, to labour diligently in their daily vocation in the ring and weekly at the Zoological,—to give three nights a week to his public duties at the Opera and Almack's, and one or two perhaps to private duties of ayeing or noing in the House of Commons,—*he* came to afford companionship to the gentle airings of an invalid, to sit silent beside her sofa, read to her when she was strong enough to listen, and listen when she was strong enough to talk.

Lord Shropshire shrugged his shoulders in reply, almost as contemptuously as when Sir William declined at Helmsley Abbey an intro-

duction to Lord Colebrooke. There was but one word of consolation in all he heard. Lady Helmsley was dangerously ill, and the extinguisher might possibly be removed from the head of the uxorious husband. He had half a mind to advise him to place her under the homœopathic system, and accelerate the moment of release. But Marcella's good sense had been as usual beforehand with him. Contenting herself with the fruits of long-established experience, she followed the counsels she had already found efficient; and followed them only to confirm the prescience of advisers, who from the first admitted to her husband that her case was hopeless!

All he had to bear from the moment that terrible sentence was pronounced, can be conceived only by those compelled to watch over the declining moments of a being tenderly beloved. She was to go!—She was to leave

him!—The unruffled surface of his unexceptionable happiness was to be broken up, and he must not indulge in a single moan, a single murmur!—He must be patient—cheerful—companionable.—Sometimes, he fancied Marcella blind to her danger, and that it was his duty to excite her apprehensions. At others, he thought he could detect indications that she was more enlightened than they supposed, — suppressing the admission of her fears in deference to the feelings of those around her; and then, he would chide Emma for the indiscretion of her anxiety, and denounce vengeance on those who might suffer their sympathy to excite the apprehensions of the dying woman. The care of her mortal body seemed to bid him keep silence; the care of her immortal soul to require him to speak. Perplexed between his double duty, he listened to the commands of the physicians that Lady Helmsley should on no

account be made aware of the precariousness of her situation; then, in the silence of his own chamber, clasped his hands desparingly together, as he reflected that the house of the departing Christian was to be set in order,—that he was not dealing by Marcella as Marcella would have dealt by him.

But this dilemma was painfully set at rest when, as summer advanced, the medical men suggested that her ladyship ought to profit by the season for a journey to the south, and ensure a milder climate for the ensuing winter. Grasping at this promise of delay if not relief, Sir William accordingly began to talk to the invalid of Hyères or Nice.

"Next winter, my dear husband, I shall be beyond the reach of climate!" replied Lady Helmsley to his proposal, the first time they were alone together. "If change be desirable for me, let it be back to the Abbey. It is my

wish to die at home,—to be buried at home." For worlds could not Helmsley have commanded the utterance of a word in contradiction to these forebodings! To hear them from the lips of his wife,—his beloved, loving, heart in heart, soul in soul Marcella,—was as if their meaning reached him for the first time. He felt that since *she* said it, it must be so. He was about to lose her. He was about to be alone!

Compassionating the frenzy of grief she had excited, Lady Helmsley lay silent on her sofa, her cold fingers intwining the throbbing convulsed hand of him who sat beside her, with his face concealed against the back of his chair. She did not reiterate her request. She did not repeat her forebodings. She lay speechless and patient; till at length, in hoarse and scarcely articulate accents, he replied,—"We will return to Helmsley then, next week." Such was his

mode of confirming the sentence she had passed upon herself!

All was prepared for their departure. Poor Emma felt that it would indeed be a relief to be spared (as she sat every night watching unsuspected in the dressing-room of the invalid), the intrusive roll of the carriages, dashing from one entertainment to another; every morning, the sight of gay equipages filled with the thoughtless and happy, proceeding to Epsom or Ascot—dejeuners or picnics; and all the thousand faces of giddy London,

Smiling, as if earth contained no tomb.

Home was best for them all! home with its holy associations;—home with its precious reminiscences of duties fulfilled by the sufferer whose probation was nearly at an end, and whose beatification on the eve of accomplishment.

Even Sir William had nothing to regret in London. His friendships there were limited; his very acquaintanceships less extensive than those of other men of his condition in life. He had none to whom to turn for sympathy in his affliction. As to Lord Shropshire, beyond sending his servant three times a week with inquiries, to which it was clear he never listened to the answers since every time he met his nephew he seemed surprised to learn that Lady Helmsley was worse, — he gave no token of interest in the event.

One day, as Sir William was sauntering out of Ridgway's shop where he had been selecting new publications for the amusement of the invalid, he encountered his uncle arm in arm with a distinguished looking middle-aged man; and it was impossible to refuse joining them up Bond Street, whither all three were proceeding. Lord Shropshire, as in decency

bound, was minute in his inquiries after the dying woman. But it was the stranger who took note of Helmsley's replies, and interest in the details the doting husband found it difficult to withhold. Helmsley's eyes were filled with tears, and his voice faltered as he spoke; and the stranger, by goodnaturedly suggesting some change of diet or position supposed to yield alleviation in cases such as that of Marcella, won his regard in a moment. He spoke in a tone of concern, he listened with a look of interest. It was impossible not to like him. Even after learning from his uncle at the moment of separation, that his well-bred, well-affectioned auditor was no other than Lord Colebrooke, Sir William felt strongly disposed in his favour.

The circumstance was scarcely worth mentioning at home; there were topics of far higher interest to be discussed between Marcella and

himself. But a day or two afterwards, the evening before their departure from town, Lady Helmsley heard him inquiring of her sister whether Burke's Peerage were packed up?

"Yes. It was in the book-box already despatched by the waggon into Northamptonshire."

"I wanted to see," observed Sir William, in explanation, "whether Lord Colebrooke has any unmarried daughters."

This explanation seemed to require further explanation; but Marcella lay too much exhausted, and Emma stood by in attendance too anxious, to experience any inquisitiveness respecting the curiosity of Sir William. He was therefore spared the necessity of informing them that, as he was crossing Cavendish Square on his way home that afternoon with his eyes fixed despondingly on the pavement, he was struck by the mention of his own name,

and looking up, found himself accosted by Lord Colebrooke with the politest—nay, the kindest inquiries after the health of Lady Helmsley. Lord Colebrooke had drawn up to make the inquiry; and at a little distance, reining in a beautiful horse apparently right proud of its most delicate rider, sat a young and lovely woman, with the most graceful figure and seat on horseback, he had ever happened to behold.

There was so much life, so much character, so much charm in the countenance of the stranger, as contrasted with the two female faces he was now in the habit of contemplating,—the one so sick, the other so sorrowful,—that it seemed as if all the impulses of youth, health, and intelligence were gathered there in marvellous combination; and when, at the close of his short dialogue with Lord Colebrooke, he touched his hat in parting salutation,

the lady, whom involuntarily he included in his obeisance, returned it with a bow and smile so sweet and gracious, that after they had proceeded on their ride along Wigmore Street towards the Park, he found himself gazing after them instead of pursuing his way homewards.

No peerage being at hand on his arrival in Harley Street, for the satisfaction of his curiosity, the lady and the lord were soon effaced from his mind. He had subjects, just then, of engrossing interest to occupy his attention.

CHAPTER IV.

Give me my robe—put on my crown!—I have
Immortal longings in me!

SHAKSPEARE.

THAT polished portion of the community self-styled the World, is a brilliant thing to look on;—but like the lark-traps which, by the perpetual motion of a few fragments of looking-glass, simulate sunshine, its brightness consists in movement,—*incessant* movement. In its conversations, a thousand subjects are rapidly whirled round to sparkle and be forgotten; its entertainments are severally nothing, but the rapidity of their succession consolidates them

into one gorgeous whole. There is no pause for examination,—no delay for discussion;—the feathers wave,—the diamonds glitter,—the music quavers,—the sweet lips prattle,—the lustres gleam;—the vivacity of ten thousand souls is blended into a single outbreak of hilarity!

Even some dire event infusing anguish into the happiest household circle, is discussed by a passing word. "Have you any news of the Helmsleys?"—demanded Lord Colebrook of Lord Shropshire, one night, as they came into momentary collision in the lobby of the opera, or the vestibule of the House of Lords, or some other place of public amusement. And the noble kinsman's reply "No;—but I fancy my nephew will soon be released from his attendance. Halford said, when they left town, that ten days must end it!"—comprised the melancholy history which left not a dry eye in

Helmsley village, and reduced the inmates of the Abbey to a state bordering on distraction!

The only person who retained any degree of serenity, was the dying woman. After the subsiding of the accession of fever produced by a journey which it had taken four days to accomplish, Lady Helmsley resumed all her usual composure. She knew that she was to die,—that her days, her hours, were numbered. But the intimate confidence in which, for seven years past, she had lived with her husband, left her no anxieties on *his* account or those of her children. Her wishes and projects for them were fully known to him; and she was too well acquainted with the strength of his affection not to feel that she was bequeathing their interests to the care of the best of fathers.

Nevertheless, with the anxiety of a tender

friend about to depart on a long journey, she could not altogether refrain from charges to her sister respecting the care of those helpless creatures, particularly of the little girl.

"I trust Knowles will not be tempted to quit Mary, even after she is in the hands of a governess," said she, in a faint voice, one evening to Miss Wroughton. "Mary is delicate; and Knowles so thoroughly understands her constitution. Should Helmsley marry again (as in all probability will be the case), changes might arise. Promise me, my dear Emma, that you will do your utmost to keep that good woman about the children?"

"Her own inclination will keep her there," replied Miss Wroughton, deeply affected by such a petition. "And Sir William will never replace the wife he loves so dearly."

"No man can answer for himself on such a point. And why *should* he?—Why should I

wish to perpetuate his regret, or prevent some other woman from enjoying the happiness I have enjoyed? A prudent remarriage would probably be the best thing that could befal the children. You are too young, my dear Emma, to remain here as their protectress. *You* will live here with Gerald,—marry—become a mother. It will be a better thing for Mary that her father—"

She could not conclude the sentence; and Emma, aware how differently her sister had always expressed herself in the similar case of their own father, saw what violence she was doing to her feelings, in order to pre-assure excuses for any future measure to her husband.

To Sir William, the patient sufferer had already exerted herself to manifest a similar opinion. A presentiment founded on her knowledge of his character, assured her that he

would marry again. She chose him to feel himself thoroughly enfranchised.

Anxious, too, not to increase his present anguish by the sight of her regret at quitting a world endeared by the tenderness of many and the esteem of all, Marcella was careful to let no murmur escape her lips, and to avoid all indulgences in those tender weaknesses which, more than any uttered phrase, indicate the consciousness of approaching dissolution. Her decline was more tedious, more painful than she had anticipated; *not* that ethereal wasting, the delusive creation of poets and novelists, but the fearful struggle of the soul with decaying nature; the harassing efforts, the restlessness, he exhaustion, the momentary delirium followed by hours of inanition. Throughout all this, the husband watched and ministered with a fervour of patient affection as feminine almost as that of the sister. He would send the

others to bed, and remain in secret by the bedside, watching long after the hireling watchers were outwearied and at rest.

It was on one of those nights, when he was alone with the sick, that what might be termed the agony of Marcella commenced. His hand was lying beside her own on the coverlid,—not clasping it, lest the pressure should be too much for its wasted fingers; when of a sudden, with an unnatural accession of voice, she began to talk, as with the tongues of angels, of GOD, of immortality, of the rewards of the just. Those who have watched beside the dying, know how often this elevation of spirit consequent upon the disorganization of mortal nature, tends to sooth and dignify sufferings otherwise insupportable.

Having anxiously examined her face, which was flushed with hectic spots, Helmsley saw that the strain of triumph in which she was in-

dulging, was the song of the dying swan; and, as if jealous that any but himself should listen to those words of Heavenly exaltation, forbore to summon assistance. Marcella was beyond the reach of mortal succour; and kneeling by her bedside, he gathered into his heart every look, every syllable, each one of which might prove the last.

In this attitude, were they found when morning dawned. But from the moment Miss Wroughton and the nurse busied themselves in administering remedies and suggesting aid, Marcella became silent. The smile ceased to play upon her lips; the light of love ceased to beam from her eyes;—the sun was setting! —Her breathing became more difficult,—her hands more cold; and as if aware that the power of motion was departing and death creeping upward towards her heart, her last hurried movement was to extend one of those

wasted hands towards her husband,—her last incoherent utterance—the words "for ever!"—

He listened. No other followed. The hand lay motionless in his,—the half-parted lips were breathless,—all was over.—The spoiler had been permitted to work his worst in the earthly Eden so long allotted to the unhappy Helmsley. He was alone there now;—alone with his motherless children,—alone with the memory of the past.

The lapse of only a few hours after the decease of Lady Helmsley, suffered to prove to what influence the Abbey had been indebted for its serene and well-ordered existence. Emancipated from the restraint imposed by her gentle presence, Sir William threw aside all self-control. Resigning himself to the impetuosity of a despair aggravated by long estrangement from rest, exercise, and food, the bereaved husband became excited to a degree of frenzy,

which rendered it impossible for the physicians to quit the house; and when, after many days he was restored to a sense of his situation, he found that Emma and the children had been removed to Wroughton Hall; and that Gerald, his brother-in-law, had taken upon himself those necessary duties which ought to have fallen to the share of the husband and the father. It was clear that the prop was gone from the house. The afflicted man gave himself up to his weakness,—to his selfishness,—to the uncontrolled flow of human passion.

At first, he insisted on administering to the last rites, and rendering honour to *her* who had been a crown of honour unto *him*. But he had not even strength to quit his room; and the brother to whom Marcella had been a mother, fulfilled the part of a son to her remains. The village poured forth its throng of mourners;—the Abbey its solitary representa-

tive. The voice of the preacher was heard,—the rattling of the dust on the coffin,—the stone was rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre,—and another human destiny was accomplished!

CHAPTER V.

Once a day I'll visit
The chapel where she lies ; and tears shed there,
Shall be my recreation : so long as
Nature will bear up with this exercise,
So long I daily vow to use it.

SHAKSPEARE.

SIR WILLIAM HELMSLEY submitted patiently to the mandate of his physicians that he should leave home for a time; but instead of turning his submission to good account by selecting a change of scene ensuring change of associations, he went no further than Wroughton Hall, where Emma's maiden aunt, Mrs. Mar-

garet Wroughton, had become a permanent resident with the family of her favourite niece.

But Wroughton Hall was full of Marcella! —It was there Sir William had wooed and won the best of daughters, to become the best of wives. *There* hung her portrait on the wall; there the early specimens of her own artist-like skill. The village, the household, overflowed with legends of her virtues. It was not the spot that should have been chosen to subdue the intensity of his regrets. Nay, when the time came for him to return home, he felt that his temporary estrangement from the scene of his melancholy trials had only served to preserve the impression more vivid in his soul; and he resolved that months should elapse, consecrated to grief and seclusion, before he suffered himself to be again tempted from the Abbey. Even Gerald was too cheerful and

too much engrossed by the worldly interests of life, to be a palatable companion to him. He fancied that his exceeding heavy sorrow should be all in all with others as with himself.

Nothing that could tend to alienate the sources of his grief was neglected. He would sit for hours in Marcella's dressing-room, surrounded by the objects which had ministered to her daily use, as if expecting to find her re-enter the room and resume her place by his side. He would wander by moonlight in all her favourite haunts, calling upon her name and breathing aloud the terms of endearment in which it was her custom to address him. He would repair, in the gloom of twilight, to the old church, and secured from vulgar intrusion, throw himself weeping on her grave, with passionate exclamations of tenderness and anguish. It was fortunate for the two poor babes that they were spared the sight of all this

distraction. Their father had consented to leave them under the charge of their female relatives at Wroughton; jealous that even those two beloved creatures should intrude into the solitude consecrated to the memory of the dead.

Sir William's household and tenants predicted of course that the young widower would fall a victim to such excess of sorrow. "Poor master was quite broken-hearted; poor master was hastening fast after my lady." But tenants and servants are superficial observers; and those who have more leisure to expatiate upon the nature of men and things, have ascertained that grief is a plant often killed by over cherishing. Almost every other passion increases in proportion to the space allotted for its growth; but sorrow, which availeth nothing to the advantage of the dead or living, is by the wisdom of Providence limited in its existence.

The holy and precious feeling which embalms the memory of those we are called upon to resign, may sanctify a whole life by its mild and silent influence; but the grief which partakes of passion,—the grief which is loud, vehement, and selfish,—frets itself to death and to oblivion.

One of the wise ones of the earth has observed, that our sorrow for the dead is at first profound and genuine, afterwards a matter of habit, and at length a matter of hypocrisy. At the close of his year of widowhood, Sir William Helmsley, though far from any assumption of affliction, had reached the second stage of consolation; he pursued his visits to Marcella's chamber and Marcella's grave, more as a matter of custom, than at the prompting of his earlier despair. Time, the comforter, had wrought its usual miracles. The wound was cicatrized. The world, with its myriads of

stirring sights and sounds and interests, had proved too much for the opposing influence of a single, silent, solitary sepulchre. If Sir William Helmsley still persisted in refusing the invitations of his neighbours, and clinging to the seclusion of the Abbey, it was more for want of knowing *how* to resume his habitual place in society, more from the egotism of a reserved Englishman who fancies that the eyes of all the world are fixed upon his comings and goings, than because he delighted in seclusion. The menials at the Abbey had laid aside their sable garments; the little children resumed their gay attire. Changes and improvements were going on. Nothing remained of Marcella save a certain stern gravity on the brow of Sir William, and a pensive sadness occasionally overspreading the fair brow of the faithful sister.

Gerald Wroughton was among the first to

notice with regret, the moral insignificance into which his brother-in-law was sinking. At three-and-twenty, Gerald was animated by a more mercurial spirit than Helmsley at twenty-eight. There was something of the impetuosity, the fervour, so often connected with organic disease, in the nature of Gerald. With *him*, to feel to say were the work of a moment.

Advised by the physician with whom he had formerly travelled on the continent, to pass as many of his winters as possible in a southern climate, Mr. Wroughton, when the second winter of his residence in England was about to set in, fancied that a warmer atmosphere was indispensable. But though he felt no reluctance at leaving his sister under the care of their sage and sober kinswoman, in a house so guarded round with security as Wroughton Hall, he had some scruple about abandoning poor Helmsley to his querulous melancholy.

He knew that his brother-in-law still declined all overtures of civility from Lord Shropshire and his country neighbours.

"If I leave him shut up with Emma, the children, and aunt Margaret, he will turn hermit and let grow his beard before my return;" mused the kind-hearted young man. "What if I could persuade him to bear me company?—He has never been abroad; the excitement of new scenes might be of service."

Conscious, however, of the weakness of the man with whom he had to deal, instead of proposing the tour to Helmsley as a matter of recreation, he suggested it as a sacrifice of good will towards himself.

"Dr. Moorsom, the physician from whose treatment he had derived so much benefit, had accompanied an English family to Naples. He wished to pass some months under his care. He wished to get through the winter in a

milder climate. It would be an act of real kindness on the part of Sir William to bear him company."

Helmsley was thus half-startled, half-beguiled into an expedition which was perhaps the happiest event that could befal him. His preparations were soon achieved; Wroughton, an experienced traveller, undertook all the business part of the journey; and there remained only for Sir William to take a tender farewell of his children, from whom nothing less than the interest of his beloved Marcella's only brother would have induced him to part. It was a heartrending pang to quit the Abbey; but, as with most other pangs, the pain was momentary. Before they reached Calais, his spirits were rising; and by the time they set foot in Paris, Sir William was ready to look about him and be amused.

"So your neighbour, my nephew, is gone

abroad?"—observed Lord Shropshire to Mr. De Ligne, a Northamptonshire squire, whose estates bordered upon Helmsley Abbey. "Had it not been for the newspapers, I should have supposed him still vegetating at his place; for he had not even the grace to apprize me of his intentions."

"Sir William has suffered deeply from the loss of his wife," observed Mr. De Ligne, gravely; "I never saw a young man more miserably cut up. It is to be hoped that change of scene will be of use to him. He would never have recovered himself at the Abbey."

"Weak in that as in all the rest!"—observed the noble kinsman. "As if local influences ought to weigh upon a man possessing any strength of mind!—As if the tinkle of a guitar and the sight of a volcano, were indispensable to wean a man from the memory of a wife!—

Never did a young fellow so fling away his opportunities as William Helmsley!—After forming at one-and-twenty the sort of detestable respectable match which a guardian had no right to oppose, though it advanced him not a jot in fortune or connexion, he ties himself to his wife's apronstring for the *borné* routine of a country gentleman!—And now, when the wife luckily dies in time to leave him an opening into life, instead of profiting by the vacancy occasioned by Theydon's elevation to the peerage to come forward for Stamford, off goes the blockhead to the continent, to bear-lead a brother-in-law who they tell me might make some figure had he fallen into better hands."

"Mr. Wroughton is a lively young man, of good abilities; but by no means so fine a scholar as my friend Helmsley," observed Mr. De Ligne, who was an F.S.A. and F.R.S.

"*Scholar?* of what use his scholarship!" exclaimed the earl, with contempt. "Give me a man who knows the world. It is with mankind, not books, we are appointed to live; and mankind should be our study."

"The knowledge of mankind is, perhaps, best attainable through the study of books," observed Mr. De Ligne, sententiously, on tiptoe for an argument. But Lord Shropshire was thinking more of his nephew than of his theory.

"I have no doubt," cried he, "Helmsley will return to England as great a boor as ever; and marry the daughter of some other country squire, or perhaps of the parson of the parish. There's not a grain of spirit in the fellow's composition! I dearly loved my poor sister, Lady Caroline. But, by Jove! it would not give me a moment's concern were I never again to hear mention of the name of William Helmsley."

CHAPTER VI.

Kalb is meant for the feather-brained thing of tags and laces, which inhabits courts ; but he wants the grace and agility proper to the species.

SCHILLER'S LETTERS.

LITTLE did Lord Shropshire foresee what cause he might one day have to desire that the name of Sir William were to remain familiar in his own ears, and those of the world.

Lord Shropshire was the father of an only son, of whom he thought as highly, as

slightingly of his nephew. Lord Bridgnorth was one of the handsomest young men in England; a leading man at the leading clubs, and indispensable at every fashionable dinner-party; gave exquisite fêtes at an exquisite villa, under the presidency of the most exquisite opera-dancer of the day; had fought a duel, caused a divorce, won a steeple chase, ruined a raw ensign in the guards at piquet; and was supposed to be able to distinguish himself in public life any rainy day, when, having nothing else to do, he should see fit to throw himself away upon politics!

Unluckily, during his interim of fine weather, the noble roué to whom ordinary modes of life were becoming stale and unprofitable, grew bored on shore, and, like other dandies nautically inclined, mounted a yacht. The result was disastrous. Designing to pass the autumn in the Baltic, Lord Bridgnorth and a

noble friend, who, being what is called "hard up," quartered himself on any one who was soft enough to feed, lodge, and bear with his inanity, landed one day in an obscure fishing-town, on the coast of Jutland; where, after treating themselves with schiedam, they saw fit to treat the natives with a specimen of the Great British art of pugilism; till their Danish antagonists, provoked by the wantonness of an attack which they little supposed to be a scientific exhibition, retaliated so much in earnest, that the following day Lord Bridgnorth fell a victim to the contusions received while his blood was in a state of inflammation.

The heir of forty thousand a year, and an ancient English peerage, to die scarcely sober, wholly unattended, in a Jutland fishing-hovel! The humiliation was greater almost than the affliction; and the bereaved father, blind to the fact that his son had fallen a victim to his

own vices, talked of nothing less than requiring from ministers a demand for vengeance on the murderers, and swore that there was something rotten in the state of Denmark. It was not enough that his only son, the finest young man in England, had been sacrificed; but the insolent newspapers had taken upon themselves to represent the event in a series of pitiful paragraphs, presuming to throw blame upon Lord Bridgnorth, and leave a doubt whether his death need be made a matter of national warfare.

Lord Shropshire was in fact almost as angry as afflicted at the loss of his son. It was such a mode to die!—such a waste of all the fashion, favour and popularity enjoyed by the best seat, best shot, best whip, best every thing in England!—such a cruel want of consideration for his father—such a sinful disregard to his position in life—such an inattention to the demands of his own consequence!—What busi-

ness had *he*, a member of White's and the House of Commons,—a peer expectant, whose bay Filly was entered for the Derby two years following, whose name was honoured at Coutts's, and good at Crockford's, to "drink, and speak, parrot, squabble, swagger, swear," with a gang of Holstein skippers?—What business had he at all yachting in the Baltic?—*Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*—

At length, as this outbreak of paternal irritability subsided, when the yacht which had taken out the rampant, insolent, fastidious, despotic libertine, brought back his senseless, helpless, useless, humiliated remains, some officious friend suggested to Lord Shropshire — a circumstance which the vigorous health and brilliant promise of Bridgnorth had hitherto kept out of view—that the ancient barony of Monthermer descended in the female line; and that, lacking male heirs, the son of

his sister Lady Caroline, his sober nephew Sir William Helmsley, must succeed to his honours.

The mortified Earl scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry. The humdrum puritanism of the country baronet was a poor exchange for the fine, gay, bold-faced villany of the fashionable Bridgnorth; but he was better than no exchange at all. Sir William was a fine young man of eight-and-twenty, his son a fine boy of seven; and this double shoot to the all-but-withered tree, was certainly preferable to the utter extinction of its branches. Five thousand a-year of Lord Shropshire's rental was entailed with the barony. It began to appear to him an almost possible thing that the remaining thirty-five might find its way to little Harry Helmsley, or his father.

He was too wise, however, to make engagements, still more to make a will. Sir William was his heir at law; and a will, that exercise of

posthumous despotism so appalling to the nerves of old gentlemen of sixty-five, need only be thought of in case of intended exclusion. Who could say that, with Bath, Brighton, Cheltenham, London and all their spinsters in ambuscade against his coronet, Lord Shropshire might not himself be tempted to marry again?

The neighbourhood of Bridgnorth Castle meanwhile occupied itself with the pros and cons of the case, as earnestly as if acquainted with the real views and motives of the parties interested. All those who had been so deeply shocked by the untimely fate of the young heir, the bad because he was such a fine dashing fellow, the good because they had hoped he would survive for amendment, the indifferent because there was a lord the less in the county, set about considering the comparative merits of Sir William Helmsley. At first, they had no great opinion of him! Though residing in an

adjoining county, the fame of his hospitalities had never reached them. He had given no entertainment of sufficient magnitude to rouse the remote echoes of Bridgnorth Castle; and had done nothing on coming of age but settle an annuity on his old nurse and marry a wife. This was a sorry substitute for one who had kept them in a ten-years' panic by the constant jeopardy of his neck in fox-chases and his fortune at the hazard-table.

They were displeased, too, at his having chosen to go abroad. It was all very right to grieve for his wife. But he was a responsible man; he ought to have stayed at home to take care of his preserves, his county interest, his children, servants, tenants, partridges and deer. The game would be destroyed during his absence; the place go to rack and ruin; his children be spoiled by their maiden grand-

aunt, and Miss Wroughton be run away with by a fortune-hunter.

On the whole, they remained true to their regrets for the loss of Henry, Viscount Bridgnorth; and sincerely hoping that the old earl might be tempted anew into matrimony, wished Sir William Helmsley a pleasant journey and a profitable winter in Italy. He was heard of from Rome—he was heard of from Naples; for *their* parts they wished to hear of him no more.

CHAPTER VII.

L'église de St. Pierre appartient-elle au Pape?—Non! aux Anglais. Je suis allé dans toute la candeur de mes rêves Catholiques, assister en pélérin, aux offices de la semaine sainte. Qu'ai-je vu?—Un *raout* Anglais dans la plus belle salle de l'ùnivers! Le *Benedictus* tombait comme un anathème sur cette multitude folle et désœuvrée.

MERY.

Vivent les voyages et les voyageurs!—England is undoubtedly the garden of the world;—its soil the most productive,— its climate the most equable,—its domestic comfort the most complete,—its constitution the most admirable,—its men the wisest and bravest,—its women the

fairest and most virtuous of all the kingdoms outstretched under the canopy of heaven. And this is probably the reason why, in approaching every noticeable city of the continent, the first thing we meet is a natty English groom exercising a fine English horse; why, on entering the Opera-house, we discover the best boxes to be filled with people who talk and laugh louder than the loudest passages of the orchestra; why lodgings are doubled in price by the influx of Great-British visitors, and why, the day after our inauguration, we find one or more cards on our breakfast-table, requesting the honour of our company to dinner at seven o'clock, three weeks in perspective.

It is no doubt owing to the irresistible attraction of English, Irish, and Scottish homes, that we may slip into a colony of our countrymen at any baiting-place between Rotterdam and Palermo; and in defiance of climate, customs,

and common sense, enjoy the habits of London naturalized among French, Italians, High Dutch and Low.—Scandal, sportsmanship, exclusivism, Harvey sauce, and soda water, have cut through or across the surface of Europe in steamboats and postchaises; and Mr. Monck Mason's balloon might have dropped into almost any place but Weilburg, and found English dowagers maundering over their tea, or English dandies disputing over their pigeon matches.

Next to Paris, Naples is perhaps the most favourite winter residence of our countrypeople. At Rome they miss the glare and gold lace of a court. They are fond of presentation and representation, galas and gaudiness; and, attracted by the united charms of nature and art, the bay the climate and the aristocratization of the Two Sicilies, are usually found in ample congregation in the Neapolitan capital.

Nothing too can be more welcome than the

contrast afforded by the aspect of Naples to that of Rome. Rome might be aptly termed the city of death in life,—Naples, of life in death. In the former, amid the pomps, vanities, and artificial distinctions of mankind, all is torpor, all oblivion;—while in the latter, though hovering on the verge of a volcano, amid buried cities and a consuming soil, all is light, loveliness, and vitality.

Not even the inspirations of art—not even the reminiscences of antiquity—which ought to create an atmosphere of poetry for the Eternal city, avail to disperse that *mal aria* of the mind, whose influence is more baneful than the pestilential vapours of the Campagna. The traveller feels transfixed upon the site of an extinguished despotism, and a despotism about to be extinguished. Roman emperors, or Roman pontiffs,—creatures of clay aspiring to the power of the divinity, though debased

below the level of human kind,—have invested the soil with dishonouring reminiscences ;—and the roofless Coliseum as the monument of the one, seems to foreshow the Vatican of future ages equally exposed to the derision of the winds of Heaven. Providence delights in rendering the wreck of empires a mark for the irony of posterity. A column in the desert, a pyramid on the shore, mark the spots where human sceptres have been brandished in audacious rivalry with the bolts of Heaven ;—and the jaundiced Tiber, flowing enviously in its shrunken channel, will one day alone survive to point out to the traveller hurrying through the pestilential wastes of the Campagna, "the spot where Rome once stood, and nothing stands."

But Naples, the land of the Sirens, seems to have inherited the spell of their enchantments ! Around the natural features of the divine Par-

thenope, poetry has enwoven its everlasting spells. With her dark blue waters, we connect the majestic epithets of Homer;—and

> Sua lieta piaggia, sua solitaria valle,
> Suo accolto monticel,

are by the genius of Virgil, still hallowed in our hearts.—Posilipo and its myrtles,—Mergellina and its roses—present associations purer than the blood-stained triumphs of the Forum or the astucious bigotry of the Vatican. It is in vain that the eloquence of Cicero or grace of Raphael interpose to rescue those fated sites from their sentence of condemnation:—what are they compared with the glorious bay,—the threatening mountain,—whose contrasted smiles and frowns have outlived the cities of successive ages, and are still bright with those heavenly impulses whose vigour is derived from the eternal life-spring of the universe!

The very population of the two cities appears to take its colouring from their opposite nature. The modern Romans are leaden, saturnine, pompous, dispirited,—soulless denizens of a City of the Dead; the Neapolitans, all fire and irritability,—dozing away half the day in the shade, but seen throughout the other half dancing gaily, almost franticly, in the sunshine,—vociferating and gesticulating with an excitability of nerve which announces that their blood is lava, and the clay wherewith they are fashioned the burning soil of the Solfatara.

Yet milder influences are not wanting. "*Cours,—vole à Naples!*" cried Jean Jacques to the lovers of music;—and to the lovers of loveliness, we should still say, "fly to Naples!" Fly thither to thaw the numbness induced by the stagnant atmosphere of Rome; fly thither to revel in a climate

able to cure all sadness but despair!—

Even the sedate Sir William Helmsley

was for some days overpowered by the influence of the place. It was long since he had felt so accessible to the charms of nature, or so little inclined to recede from the contact of society; and it was rather as a matter of precaution than of inclination, that he repeated to Mr. Wroughton his determination to submit no further than was indispensable to the importunities of the English coteries established at Naples.

As if an unencumbered man, with an unencumbered estate, had any right to the disposal of his own time and convenience!—The secretary of legation, Sir Raymond Horton, had been Sir William's chum at Eton; and various English families, settled there for the winter, had divers degrees of right and title to his civility. The mere arrival of two gentlemanly young Englishmen, of whom one was known to be a bachelor, and the other a widower, had caused the mammas to glance with satisfaction

at their daughters. The elderly gentlemen trusted the new comers might prove whisters; the younger ones that they might prove bidders for their horses, or backers for their bets. The ambassador, Lord Portumna, with whom Gerald Wroughton was already acquainted, was prompt in his civilities; and in the course of the first week, every one possessing the smallest pretensions to their acquaintance, left cards for Wroughton and his brother-in-law.

Of all these visitors, the most welcome to the former, was his old friend, Dr. Moorsom.

"You see you have tempted me again to Naples, my dear doctor!" cried Gerald, receiving him with a hearty shake of the hand. "It is almost worth while to pass a few years in getting sick and sorry in England, for the delight of returning to this blessed blue sky and lightsome climate."

"No symptoms in your countenance at least

of any need for the move," cried Dr. Moorsom, cheerfully. "Never saw you looking better! But I am too fond of this maccaroni-stewing town myself, to be surprised that others find attraction here. Why even I, scrub as I am, instead of nailing myself down in England, as I ought, to conquer an independence, must needs come sneaking back to the Chiaja for a peep at the dark blue seas, every time I can manage to cut across Europe per favour of other people's post-horses."

"I saw by the papers you were here, which was one of my inducements to the journey. You are with the St. Pauls, I think?"

"Do you know them?"

"No."

"Then you *must!*—Inoffensive people!—Madame (my patient), a fine lady, but expiring by inches of an excruciating malady—"

"Poor woman!" interrupted Helmsley, in a tone of concern—"

"A malady beyond reach of the healing art," continued the doctor;—"namely, a whimsical nature, and fifteen thousand a-year!"

"You find Mrs. St. Paul as troublesome a charge as you found *me!*" said Gerald, laughing. "But tell me who of my former acquaintances remain in Naples."

"At the embassy, only Lord Portumna and Sir Raymond.—The two attachés are new."

"And an acquisition?"—

"Alexis Bagot (the *roué* Lord Royston's still more *roué* brother), is an open-hearted, empty-headed young coxcomb, not worth a guinea. Young Harford, the other, is a stupid, self-conceited ass, worth nothing but his heir-ship-apparent to one of the largest fortunes in England. However, they add to the general stock of amusement. Lord Portumna is still a bachelor, and the most *fête*-giving and popular of men."

"And Prince Guastalla?"

"On the look out for an English heiress, to enable him to sweep the cobwebs out of his fine old palace; while his sister, Princess Stradalla, is as assiduous as ever to any English lord she fancies she can cajole into buying one of her pictures."

"And what English have you?"

"Lady Drummond,—the Actons,—Gell, and a few other permanencies. For birds of passage, we have a Sir James and Lady Darling, with a whole tribe of Darling Misses, come to be continentalized out of the rust contracted in the wolds of Yorkshire; and a rich Mr. and Mrs. Longman Tomkinson, who buy their way into better society abroad than they can manage at home. These are all who open their houses. Let me see—no!—though last, far greatest—there are Lord Colebrooke and Lady Adelaide."

"Lord Colebrooke!" cried Wroughton,

starting up. "I noticed his name in the Hotel register in Geneva, and fancied he was on his *return* to England."

"No; they have been here these three weeks."

"Then it was certainly Lady Adelaide we passed in one of the corridors of the Chartreuse!—Don't you remember, Helmsley, seeing some people get into their carriage, and our courier saying it was a *Milor Anglais avec sa demoiselle?*"—

"I was too much interested by the aspect of the place to notice them," answered Sir William.

"Then (pardon me) you pronounce your own condemnation!" cried the doctor, abruptly. "All the monasteries in Europe, ruined or entire, are not worth a glimpse of the noble face and form of Lady Adelaide de Vere!"

"Still so enthusiastic, my dear Moorsom?" said Gerald Wroughton, with a smile.

"And why not?"—replied the doctor, "I speak as a connoisseur rather than as a man. My friend Bartolini once commissioned me (in the interests of sculpture) to implore Lady Adelaide to stand to him in the character of a muse, for the benefit of his atteliers, or rather for the benefit of the tribune; for as sure as fate, the grand duke would have purchased such a chef d'œuvre to form a pendant to Canova's Venus."

"And did not such an argument persuade her?"—inquired Wroughton.

"Pho! pho!—you, who know Lady Adelaide, can you suppose her capable of doing any thing she was asked?—Her ladyship would not hear of it. Mrs. St. Paul, who is a little jealous of her triumphs, will have it that her ladyship's pride revolted

against the idea of being hawked about in plaster casts, on the trays of the image-boys!"

"*Do* you know Lady Adelaide?"—demanded Sir William of his brother-in-law, having waited till the caustic doctor finished his sentence.

"It were presumption to say yes; it were hypocrisy to say no," replied Gerald. "I saw a good deal of Lord Colebrooke when I was here before. Lady Adelaide noticed me as much as a beautiful woman of four-and-twenty ever notices a cubling squire in his non-age."

"It was to my connexion with Gerald, then," thought Sir William, "that I was indebted for the gracious advances of these people when I met them in London!"

"But amid all this gossip and scandal," exclaimed the doctor, "I am forgetting my

errand, which was neither to feel your pulse nor backbite our friends. I am the bearer of a message from Mrs. St. Paul (St. Paul called on you both yesterday, in proper form) to beg you will dine with them to-day, without ceremony and in boots, that I may enjoy a long talk with you."

Sir William drew up as Englishmen do, when startled by a sudden invitation.

"Don't refuse!" said the doctor. "They are pleasant, well-meaning people, who will do their best towards enlivening your stay at Naples. Indeed I have half promised that you will come."

"With all my heart," said Gerald. "Helmsley, you have no objection?—"

"If Mr. and Mrs. St. Paul are *really* to be alone,—" hesitated Sir William.

"At six o'clock, then," said Dr. Moorsom, leaving the room, and caring more for the

acquiescence of his young friend than for the pompous concession of Helmsley.

Alone with his brother-in-law, Sir William longed to question Gerald concerning his intimacy with the Colebrookes, and ascertain whether his previous silence concerning them proceeded from accident or design. It almost occurred to him to suspect young Wroughton of duplicity in his avowed ignorance of the sojourn of the family in Naples; and to suppose it possible that his eagerness for a winter in Italy, might originate in a desire to renew his acquaintance with a person so irresistible as Lady Adelaide de Vere.

But between two young men living together on terms of the closest intimacy, certain reserves were kept up; and Helmsley felt that there would be indelicacy in forcing the confidence of Wroughton on a point where he might have motives for reserve. They were

now about to be thrown into the society of Lord Colebrooke and his daughter; and it would be easy for Helmsley to make his observations and form conclusions of his own.

CHAPTER VIII.

Succeeding hours his former fame destroy,
He who began a man—will end, a boy.
OVID.

THE St. Pauls were, as they had promised to be, alone; and the comfort and decency of a good English establishment under the presidency of an Englishwoman of elegant manners, was an agreeable relief to the travellers, after the roughness of Italian magnificence and the discomfort of Italian inns.

Mr. St. Paul was a finical little man, who lived only to endow with undue importance the

nothingnesses of life:—Mrs. St. Paul a pretty die-away little woman, assigning importance to little beyond her own convenience and sensations. St. Paul was overflowing with elegant classicality, his wife with the jargon of valetudinarianism; but Dr. Moorsom, by talking plain sense for both, added the only charm that might have been wanting to the best appointed dinner-table in Naples.

Sir William Helmsley was of course fastened upon by the host,—who delighted in the encounter of a scholarly Englishman, to whom he could exhibit his erudition as a cicerone,—while Gerald fell to the share of the lady; and the dessert was over, and the party re-installed in the drawing-room, before she had displayed half the extent of her ignorance, in a learned exposition of the philosophy of the Homœopathic system.

Mrs. St. Paul was interrupted in her last

blunder by the entrance of her page with a visiting-card.

"Do, my dear doctor, come and decipher these pencilled hieroglyphics for me," said she, taking it from the salver.

"Can *I* be of any use?" said Gerald—perceiving that Moorsom was encumbered with his coffee-cup.

"Thank you!—Dr. Moorsom is the only person of my acquaintance who, having studied in the pyramids, can make out Lady Adelaide de Vere's handwriting.—Well, doctor,— what does she say?"

"That, if you are alone, she will drink tea with you. Lord Colebrooke dines with the king."

"Am I to send an answer?"—

"My lady is at the door in her carriage, and sent up her card," interposed the page.

"Then go down to her by all means, doctor,

and say I shall be *delighted* to see her,"—cried Mrs. St. Paul, involuntarily adjusting her cap, and shaking out the Valenciennes of her handkerchief in anticipation of a female visitor.

"I am enchanted that you account Helmsley and myself nothing, and announce yourself alone," said Gerald, laughing; "for I am impatient to renew my acquaintance with Lady Adelaide."

Meanwhile, although Mr. St. Paul, disregarding these frivolous interruptions, continued to prose on to Sir William concerning the last excavations at Pompeii, Helmsley could no longer command his attention. He felt displeased.—He fancied—Heaven knows why,—that Lady Adelaide's visit had been preconcerted between her ladyship and Dr. Moorsom; that he and his brother-in-law had been manœuvred into dining with the St. Pauls, and

above all, betrayed into coming in boots. There was trickery, there was ill-usage in the whole business !—

Another minute, and steps being audible in the adjoining room, Sir William rose from his seat with the mechanical courtesy due to the entrance of a female. But the folding doors were not thrown open by the servants. Dr. Moorsom re-entered unannounced, and alone.

"*Well?*" demanded Mrs. St. Paul, as the doctor unceremoniously traversed the saloon—"What have you done with Lady Adelaide ?"

"Sent her home again."

"But I begged you to say we should be delighted to see her ?—"

"And so I did,—adding only that you had two English gentlemen with you. Lady Adelaide fancied she might be *de trop*."

"You surely did not give her ladyship reason

to imagine her visit could be disagreeable to *us*?"—cried Gerald, almost angrily.

"My dear sir,—make yourself easy!—I did nothing that could compromise your gallantry. I told her only that you were not prepared for company; which perhaps reminded her that she was en déshabillé; for she immediately ordered her carriage home again."

"How English!"—cried Mrs. St. Paul, vexed at her disappointment.—"So much as Lady Adelaide has lived on the continent, not to have laid aside the chain-mail of English formalities!"—

"Would that of all her countrywomen one could say the same!" thought the three single men present.

"*Our* notions of politeness," continued Mrs. St. Paul, pettishly, "are all connected with laced buttonholes, and our best bib-and-tucker!—We never fancy ourselves fine enough

to do honour to ourselves and our friends."—Sir William, who was still sufficiently English to blush for his boots, experienced a twinge of conscience at the charge. Fortunately for his confusion, Dr. Moorsom engaged in defence of Lady Adelaide. Of all earthly women, he said, *she* ought to be most indifferent to dress; her beauty being of an order beyond deriving the slightest advantage from such accessories. "*Her* attraction," observed the doctor, "consists in grace, ease, dignity, intelligence. She is charming in the simplest morning dress."

"And on horseback!" involuntarily added Sir William, half apart.

"True! Nothing can be more perfect than her seat on horseback!"—chimed in Mr. St. Paul. "She reminds me of an Amazon in an antique bas-relief I once saw at Girgenti." While Wroughton could not refrain from exclaiming to Helmsley, "You have *seen* her, then!—You never told me that you had seen her?"

Sir William's scarcely-audible reply was luckily overpowered by the vehemence of Mrs. St. Paul; who could not bear to hear even her friend Lady Adelaide so unnecessarily over-lauded at the moment of giving her offence.

"I do not say that she is not handsome and clever," cried the little beauty, raising her voice three semitones above her valetudinarian-key;—"I only maintain that she is a vast deal too indifferent to the opinion of the world."

"The world indulges in such a world of foolish opinions!" said Gerald, playfully.

"Lady Adelaide thinks herself privileged to say and do every thing she pleases!"—persisted the lady.

"Because she pleases to say and do nothing but what is pleasing!" vindicated the gentleman.

"I beg your pardon!—*I*, for one, think the independence of her manners any thing but pleasing."

"Yet they could not become more deprecating without hypocrisy," interposed Dr. Moorsom. "Age is not to be measured by years. Though scarcely five-and-twenty, Lady Adelaide has been at the head of her father's house from the age of fourteen, doing its honours to all the royalty and nobility of Europe. When Lord Colebrooke was ambassador at the Hague, I recollect his daughter presiding over his fêtes, like a *Reine de Seize ans*, or rather like the Queen of Faery in person."

"Yes, we all know that she is a woman of the world!"—cried Mrs. St. Paul, with a somewhat tremulous voice. "The spoiled child of the cleverest man and greatest *roué* in Europe! Well!—We shall see whether their united cleverness achieves the object they have now in view!"

"And what may that be?—To outblaze

Vesuvius at the approaching carnival?" inquired Gerald, with a smile.

"Outblaze!—Oh dear, no.—Lady Adelaide is superior to display. She only wants to catch Lord Portumna."

"My dear Louisa!" interposed St. Paul, who was now turning over the pages of a volume of Piranesi for the amusement of Sir William, unconscious that his visitor's attention was very differently occupied.

"Is Lord Portumna a great *partie?*" inquired Helmsley, addressing the question generally to the circle.

"A man of broken fortune and broken constitution,—first-rate abilities, and first-rate fashion!" replied Dr. Moorsom.

"But by no means deeply read,—far from an eminent scholar!" rejoined Mr. St. Paul. "A well-bred man, certainly, and admirably fitted for his vocation; but one soon grows weary of

his society. One derives no information from him."

"Admirably fitted indeed, then, for his diplomatic vocation!"—cried Gerald. "I am no longer surprised that Lord Colebrooke, who, on the next change of ministry, is likely to enter the cabinet, should estimate the value of such a son-in-law!"

"Yes, one often hears that Lord Colebrooke is *likely* to be made premier, or that he is *going* to form a ministry," said Mrs. St. Paul, still unforgiving; "but, somehow or other, the day never arrives."

"Shall I tell you why?" demanded Dr. Moorsom. "Lady Adelaide has taken it into her head that her father is not equal to the fatigues of office; and insisted on bringing him abroad, a few months ago, as a plea for the rejection of overtures of the most flattering description."

"I suppose she cared more for Lord Portumna than for Downing Street!" said Mrs. St. Paul.

"She cared more for her father than either!" cried the doctor. "Let us be just!—Lady Adelaide shall be ugly, if you please,—vain, if you please,—frivolous, if you please—artificial, if you please; but she has given fatal and irrefragable proof that she is the best daughter in the world!"

CHAPTER IX.

L'univers, mon ami, ne pense point à toi ;
L'avenir encore moins ; conduis bien ton ménage,
Divertis-toi, bois, dors, sois tranquille, sois sage.

VOLTAIRE.

SIR WILLIAM HELMSLEY did not easily lose his susceptibility to the charm of the most delightful climate and most vivacious city of Europe. The din,—the movement, the many-coloured complexions of Naples, had roused him to a new sense of existence,—the elasticity of the atmosphere soothed him to a more ex-

quisite;—he felt fuller of life and spirits than he had fancied he should ever feel again.

The instincts of the scholar and artist were called forth; and while Gerald was renewing his intimacies with card-playing Duchesses and medal-hunting prelates, Helmsley was sketching the picturesque spinstresses who ply their distaffs on the Chiaja, or plucking a leaf of laurel beside the tomb of Virgil. So rapidly had the advanced season of their journey compelled them to traverse Italy, that his attention was not overwearied by the multiplicity of sites and monuments which exhaust the sympathy of more deliberate travellers: Florence, Bologna, Rome, had done little more than stimulate his curiosity for the admiration of new wonders. He had none of the indifference of those who, beholding in Naples only its charms of site and classical association, pronounce that it contains scarcely an object deserving the attention of a *dilettante*.

The two brothers tacitly agreed to be no restraint on each other's movements. For all that was new to Helmsley, was stale and unprofitable to Gerald; all that was attractive in the eyes of a young man of three-and-twenty, was frivolous and vexatious to Sir William; and as Mr. St. Paul was only too happy in the duties of ciceroneship, the few expeditions where an experienced companion is an advantage, were undertaken by Helmsley under his learned auspices. For the twenty-seventh time in his Neapolitan life, St. Paul visited Pompeii, in order to favour the Northamptonshire baronet with his notes explanatory;—with theories of his own invention and facts the invention of the hireling guides of the place.

On returning home, from one of these classical expeditions, Sir William learned from his brother that he had been riding with Lord Colebrook and his daughter on the Posilipo

road, and had promised to join them that evening in their box at St. Carlos.

"I met Moorsom, too;" added Gerald, "and knowing that you were to be alone and that the St. Pauls would not miss Pasta in the Semiramide, persuaded him to come and spend the evening with you."

"Thank you!"—replied Sir William, with a short dry cough. He could not help feeling that his brother had all the advantages on his side;—Rossini, Pasta, the cleverest man in Europe, and Lady Adelaide De Vere, against a doctor of physic and a cup of ill-brewed Bohea.! But Gerald, aware that Sir William had not entered any place of public amusement since the loss of his wife, fancied there would be indelicacy in proposing to *him* a visit to the opera. More than once, suggestions of a similar nature had been received by Helmsley with an outburst of wounded feeling; and

there was no reason for supposing a moral revolution to have been effected in his mind, by a fortnight's sojourn in Naples.

"I am sorry to be under the necessity of excusing myself to Dr. Moorsom," added Sir William, at length; "but I must have this evening to myself. I have only written a few hurried lines to Emma since we arrived here; and unless I mark by somewhat more than a word or two of thanks my gratitude for her kind details concerning the children, I cannot hope she will continue to favour me."

"True!—To-morrow is the day for the courier," observed Gerald, carelessly, on other thoughts intent. "I will leave word, then, on my way, for Moorsom not to interrupt you. Give my love to Emma and Aunt Margaret, and tell them I will write next week."

On returning that night from the opera, Wroughton noticed in his brother-in-law's

countenance, an expression of pique. The transition is a trying one from a crowded theatre, blazing with light and buzzing with enthusiasm, to the dull chamber at home, where, by the light of two melancholy candles or a solitary lamp, sits the studious, home-staying friend. There should be great sobriety on the part of the world-haunting individual, or great natural cheerfulness on that of the world-avoiding, to bring them tolerably on a par. Unluckily, Sir William was dispirited by the associations called up by his letters to Wroughton Hall; and Gerald elated, as became his age, by the recent contact of youth and beauty, wit and animation. He entered the dull room with a smiling and glowing face; and was about to expand into raptures concerning Pasta and Lady Adelaide, when he was checked by the cold taciturnity of Helmsley.

"This will not do!" thought the good-natured Wroughton, retiring to rest. "I must not allow this poor fellow's hypochondriacism to become habitual. Lord Colebrooke is all friendliness. I will ask the favour of him to call here to-morrow, and include Sir William in the invitation I have accepted to dine at the Palazzo Balbi. There will be no possibility of refusing, when asked in that sort of off-hand *viva voce* manner.

The plan was successful. Lord Colebrooke seemed to enter fully into Gerald's feeings and Sir William's repugnances; and performed his part in the little drama with so much apparent *naïveté* and real good breeding, that "no," under any possible modification, was unpronounceable. As he dressed for the party, Helmsley satisfied his conscience for the pleasure the prospect afforded him, by assuring himself that his only object in the

visit was to form some conclusion respecting Lady Adelaide de Vere, as regarded the attentions of young Wroughton.

Lord Colebrooke had said nothing of a "party," because to *him* the crowds of society were habitual; he would only have felt it necessary to apologize, had there been but himself and his daughter to assist his two guests in bearing onwards on their shoulders the burden of the passing time. Such was not, such had never been, the tenour of *his* existence. His father, a cabinet minister,—his mother, an accredited beauty of the last reign,—his lordship's youth had progressed from the mobs of a fashionable season, to the lively circles of Colebrooke Castle or Woodland's Lodge, overflowing, from the close of the session to its recommencement, with a succession of illustrious guests. An occasional excursion to the continent, that is to Spa or Baden, Paris

or Naples, filled up the measure of existence both for the old lord and the new. They were creatures of the community; their notions of domestic life consisted in the seclusion which is surrounded by a score or two of servants, and a dozen or two of guests.

Such were, of course, the habits which Lady Adelaide had witnessed from her birth. The spoiled child of fashionable parents, she had been brought up at her father's knee; a plaything to wits out of season, and statesmen out of place,—mimicking the airs of beauties, and the grimaces of coquettes. From her earliest age, she had heard things freely talked of which, in less distinguished circles are discussed only in a whisper. There was no pause for the growth of delicate sentiments; no silence for the development of gentle reflections. Like foreigners of every class, English people of fashion have a habit of wearing their hearts on

their sleeve, till they become hardened by exposure; and opening the budget of their opinions for the advantage of all and sundry, till not a charm of mind remains to be dedicated pure and undefiled to the sacred sympathy of a friend.

Of all this, Helmsley knew only that Lord Colebrooke, as one of the early boon companions of his uncle, shared in the worldliness of Lord Shropshire's ways and sentiments. He was aware also that Marcella had declined a presentation to Lady Adelaide; but nothing wherefore. The Colebrookes were confessedly continentalized in their modes of life; and his departed angel might perhaps have dreaded to expose to such contact, the almost cloistral sanctity of her opinions. But though Marcella was a being apart from her sex, and high above competition, Lady Adelaide might have claims to an average portion of its excellences.

She might be as good as the generality of women; nay, might be a very charming woman, and still remain immeasurably below his standard of perfection.

Such were his cogitations on his way to the stately apartments of the Palazzo Balbi in the Largo di Castello, inhabited by the earl; but when, the doors of the saloon being thrown open, the buzz and laughter of a crowded room burst upon the startled ear so long habituated to seclusion, Helmsley felt himself betrayed into a pit-fall. The party, as parties generally are, became hushed into the silence of examination, while Sir William was going through his compliments to Lord Colebrooke, and presentation to Lord Colebrooke's daughter; and a single glance round the room showed that the circle was composed of strange faces. He had hoped to meet his friend Sir Raymond Horton; but not a creature present had poor Helmsley ever beheld before.

Of Gerald, indeed, they were mostly old acquaintances; and as Mr. Wroughton quietly glided round the circle with a bow to one, a shake of the hand with another, and a finger extended to a third, in answer to their "How are you?" or "*Comment ça va?*" he felt almost envious of the ease and popularity of his brother-in-law. But neither before, nor at, nor after dinner, did Gerald address more than a profound bow to Lady Adelaide de Vere, who was the only lady of the party; nor did it need a star and green ribbon to acquaint Sir William that the somewhat faded looking man who occupied the nearest station to her chair, was no other than Lord Portumna. This accounted for his friend, Sir Raymond's absence. Excellencies seldom like to be kept in check by the presence of their perpetual blister or secretary of legation.

The dinner was good, the party agreeable. An incessant chatter of conversation was kept

up, overpowering to the saturnine Englishness of Sir William's nature; and the vehement gesticulation and grotesque play of countenance of four or five Italians among the guests, struck him as the grimace of mountebanks: —his Great British composure, being still unprepared for the ardour of "souls made of fire and children of the sun."

He was surprised to observe the eagerness with which Wroughton entered into discussion with these people, on trifling points of general interest in society, but of no account to those who weigh and measure the trivialities of life with a too mathematical precision. But presently, amid the discordant jar of a dozen male voices, his ear was struck by the silvery accents of a female; and, one by one, all became silent to attend to the singularly-musical enunciation of Lady Adelaide. She spoke French, as the language generally familiar to her guests; and

of music, as the topic universally acceptable; and Helmsley was forced to admit that it was impossible to talk better, with less pretension, or more judgment. She seemed to understand the science as thoroughly as she felt the charm of "the only sensual pleasure without vice;" her very voice and intonation being formed by nature to discourse eloquent music about music.

"Were she in the wrong, I should fancy her right, while she delivered herself so gracefully!" observed Prince Ottavio Sforza, who sat beside Sir William and noticed the approving expression of his countenance. "But she is right,—logically and practically right; your countrywoman, sir, is the finest musician in all Italy."

Lord Portumna was the only person who ventured to oppose the theories propounded by Lady Adelaide; not by argument, but by the most caustic and polished irony. Scorning

to admit the ascendancy of either reason or sentiment, he attacked his fair friend with playful witticisms incomprehensible to his Italian auditors, and evoking only the applause of Mr. Harford, the chief duty of whose diplomatic vocation as junior *attaché* consisted in furnishing an echo to his *chef*. Helmsley was delighted with the mildness and temper with which Lady Adelaide, unmoved by these idle tokens of her defeat, tried to convince, as long as there appeared a gleam of candour in Lord Portumna; and became patiently silent, the moment she found her efforts parried by buffoonery. Her very mode of diverting the conversation into another channel, was a triumph of good breeding; and Sir William felt that he had never beheld an Englishwoman whose manners were so perfectly conciliating.

For on that point, Englishwomen must be allowed to fail. They are too much the

creatures of impulse and too little of actresses, to subdue their movements to the happy medium of good taste. They are either shy, and attempt to conceal it under reserve and *hauteur*; or apt through excessive vivacity to degenerate into abruptness. With rare exceptions, their address is destitute of grace; and their intended civilities might often be mistaken for an affront. But in Lord Colebrooke's daughter, all appeared spontaneous as it was ingratiating. If there were art in the business, she had art enough to conceal it.

The whole party moved together to the drawing-room to take coffee; and after it was served, Sir William was vexed to perceive that nothing remained but to make a parting bow. He had intended to draw nearer to the enchantress, and hazard an attempt towards the improvement of his acquaintance with Lord Colebrooke. But the party was already broken up;

each was hastening to his evening's amusement. Helmsley had declined the proposition of Prince Ottavio to present him at the conversazione of his sister, the Duchess d'Asti, where he now found that Gerald and the majority of his companions were proceeding; and arrived at home,—at his dull solitary home,—he had nothing to occupy him but the consciousness of having been a dead letter in a brilliant society;—and the certainty that he should be set down by the Colebrookes as a dull, silent, impracticable Englishman,—not worth the trouble of a second attempt to include in the gay and enlightened circle of their hospitality.

"After all,"—mused the country baronet, trying to justify to himself the failing of which he was only too painfully conscious,—"*is* it worth while to unfold one's opinions and sentiments, for the amusement of a set of people one sees for the first time, and may never behold

again?—Certainly not! It is necessary to *me* to entertain some esteem for a man, before I admit him into my confidence."

Sir William did not perceive that certain qualifications must pre-exist to render a man agreeable in society; either that want of sympathy with any particular person which produces a congeniality of feeling with all the world; or that warm sympathy with a particular person, inducing a desire to shine in their eyes by universal popularity. Neither of these causes at present stirred him out of his habitual apathy.

CHAPTER X.

Corsaires à corsaires,
L'un l'autre s'attaquant, ne font pas leurs affaires.

La Fontaine.

The following morning when he entered the breakfast-room, a fashionable looking young Englishman was sitting with Gerald, whom nothing but Wroughton's introduction as "Mr. Bagot," could have induced Helmsley to suppose a new acquaintance formed at the party of the preceding night. Since their arrival, Alexis the Great had been on a *partie de chasse* with Prince Guastalla, in Calabria; but he was

evidently disposed to make up for lost time in improving an intimacy with the new-comers.

"How do you mean to amuse yourself through the winter?" he inquired of Wroughton, as soon as the ceremonies of introduction to his brother-in-law were concluded. "You were here two years ago, I think?—There was a better set of people, then. At present (with the exception of Lady Wycombe and her clique), I never saw worse company!"

"I do not know Lady Wycombe," said Wroughton, carelessly.

"*Not know Lady Wycombe?*—Why, my dear fellow, where the deuce—a—a—a—I mean 'tis an unlucky thing that you should *not*; for it is her rule to make no English acquaintances on the continent. And after all it is a highly necessary regulation;—for every English person in a certain set has the *entrée* of her house in London."

"A proof that I do not belong to what you call a certain set. I told you last night," said Gerald, laughing, "that I was but a country squire!"

"Yes, yes.—But no one intends to *remain* a country squire. You don't suppose that I mean to live and die a dirty *attaché*, copying lordly crinkum-crankum into legible text, and compressing circumbendibus periods into intelligible English?—Have you been presented to Madame de Hardenstein, the Austrian ambassadress?"

"No."

"Nor to the charming Madame de la Chuchotterie?"

"The French ambassadress?—No."

"Why, my dear fellow, where have you—a—a—a—with whom then are you *faufilé* in Naples?"—

"With your friend Guastalla—with Ottavio Sforza—with the Duchess d'Asti."

"But no English?—so much the better."

"We dined the other day with the St. Pauls," said Sir William, manfully, not choosing to eat his cutlet in utter silence.

"The St. Pauls?—Oh! my God!"—cried Bagot, with an air of ineffable disgust: "What *could* induce you to confront the vapour of that woman's ether, or the weight of that fellow's pedantry?—But I forgot—you *have* your apology!—St. Paul's *chef* is really one of the first *artistes* in Naples, and for the sake of his *entrées* one may put up with those of his fortunate owners; particularly if you manage to sit next old Moorsom, who is a capital fellow; —helps one's digestion like a glass of crusty port!—I have the greatest regard for Moorsom. —Whereabouts have you got your box?"

Sir William did not exactly comprehend the transition.

"We have none,'" replied Gerald. "Sir William is not particularly fond of music, or

I should have indulged myself. I must look out for a stall."

"Do not let *my* disinclination be any obstacle," said Helmsley, making a desperate effort. "I do not intend to miss Pasta while I am here. I shall be happy to join you in a box."

"Then I recommend you to engage the one next Colebrooke's, which was bespoken for Lady Mary Mitchell, who has made up her mind to pass the winter at Rome. Shall I speak to Tavarini for you?—I believe it is still to be had. I wanted Portumna to take it. But when bachelor ambassadors come to his lordship's wiggy time of life, they do not like to bring their *attachés* into contact with their courtships."

"Lord Portumna, then, is *really* paying his addresses to Lady Adelaide de Vere?"—demanded Sir William, fancying Gerald might not like to push the inquiry.

"Paying his addresses?"—exclaimed Alexis Bagot, throwing down the stand of arms he had been making on the breakfast-table with its supernumerary spoons and forks. "Paying! —How I hate that expression!—It reminds one of every thing that is detestable;—debt —visits—grudges—"

"Would you have had me inquire whether he was making love to her ladyship?"—cried Gerald banteringly, half afraid that Helmsley might not take such coarse pleasantry in good part.

"*Making* love to Lady Adelaide de Vere!—As if the love of such women was not to be had ready made!"

"Lady Adelaide is a great favourite of mine; I have a sincere regard for her," said Wroughton, more gravely.

"So have I!—I am in love with her myself for a day or two, every time we meet after a year's absence. But as to feeling respect for

a woman who—but no matter!—I did not come hither to talk scandal; but to inquire, in Lord Portumna's name, when you intend to be presented?"

"I *have* been presented. I shall go to court on Monday next;—and if I can prevail on Helmsley to—"

"I had just despatched a note on the subject to Lord Portumna," said Sir William, calmly; and while he proceeded to make his arrangements with the *nonchalant attaché*, Gerald indulged in silent wonder at the change which a couple of days had effected in the views of his brother-in-law. It was not for *him*, however, to check so happy a transformation by any token of surprise. Pleased that his winter was likely to be a pleasanter one than he had anticipated, He resolved to make all haste to secure the box at St. Carlos, and get the name of Sir William included in his invitations.

The opera-box, however, was disposed of;—Mrs. Longman Tompkinson, attracted by the prospect of a station next to the most fashionable woman in Naples, had secured it at a high premium. Nor did Gerald regret the loss. Another was easily obtained, from which his own visits to Lady Adelaide were less immediately under the inspection of his grave brother-in-law. If Portumna dreaded the approximation of his attaché's jetty curls, Wroughton might not have been altogether easy under the inquiring eye of Helmsley.

Meanwhile Sir William—his deputy lieutenant's uniform duly prepared, his horses properly appointed, and his various introductions effected,—was surprised to find that, after the first effort of a launch, his course over the untroubled waters of pleasure was a smooth one. Nothing is more amazing to little people than the discovery of their own insignificance.

So long accustomed in Northamptonshire to find his comings and goings,—his finger-aches and heart-aches,—a matter of moment to the infinitesimal sphere of a country neighbourhood, it surprised him to observe that not a soul in Naples was surprised at his return to the social world. After the first mortification, he began to congratulate himself on the fact; and to feel that independence is sometimes preferable to dignity. Dr. Moorsom, indeed, clapped him somewhat roughly on the shoulder while congratulating him on his amended health and spirits; but not another creature. not even the minutious Mr. St. Paul, noticed that he had ever held back from company and was now among the foremost in the vortex.

The carnival was beginning. There were balls, royal, diplomatic, foreign, or English, every night, and even some mornings of the week; in spite of which, St. Carlos, the Accademia, and a

variety of weekly conversazioni, held on the monotonous tenour of their way. Not a moment's leisure for recoil or reflection!—All was mirth, gaiety, music, feasting, dancing.—Helmsley and his brother-in-law rarely enjoyed more than an hour's tête-à-tête.

That lovely queen of Naples, now departed, forgotten, and replaced, was then in the zenith of her beauty and popularity; and among the foreign ladies especially favoured by her notice, were Lady Wycombe and Lady Adelaide de Vere. But it was only when sunning themselves in the royal smile, that they suffered themselves to be brought into contact. There was war, not *ouverte* but *couverte*, between the fair countrywomen:—Lady Wycombe being a strictly English Englishwoman of fashion, armed to the teeth with the exceptiousness and high-tory exclusivism of London *Durchlauchtigkeit*; Lady Adelaide, a continentalized

Englishwoman of fashion, rigid in her principles of taste and toilet, but lax in the punctilio and etiquette of minor morals. Lady Adelaide chose to associate with any one who pleased her; Lady Wycombe scorned to be pleased by any one not legitimately privileged to be pleasing.

The two ladies, young handsome and independent, might perhaps have enjoyed their mutual detestation undisturbed, till for want of opposition it exhausted itself to extinction, but for the efforts of the idle and frivolous by whom they were surrounded. Not the Italians; —the Italians are too indolent to trouble themselves with fomenting other people's discords; more especially the Neapolitans, who, steeped in the sensual enjoyment of the most delicious of climates, have no genius for *tracasserie*. But the English, wherever they colonize, beget factions. The women more

especially, delight in a petty feud: and the first thing sure to be confided to one on joining a society of fellow-country people on the continent, is a tale of scandal or a disreputable accusation.

There was, in the first place, Mrs. St. Paul; who, like the bat in the fable, fought alternately on both sides; and occupied her idle mornings in carrying from one party to the other, hints, sneers, and misrepresentations; with all her little *douilletterie* of a valetudinarian and scarcely audible voice, continuing to deal sledge-hammer blows upon the self-love of both her bosom friends.

Then came Mrs. Longman Tompkinson, conscious that the most golden of her gold would be insufficient to gild over in the sight of the high and mighty countess, the looms rom which Mr. Longman Tompkinson of Stoke Park, derived his mansions in Bucking-

hamshire and Carlton Terrace, his plate, equipages, parliamentary interest and promise of a baronetcy: but trusting that the excellence of her professional concerts *might* bribe the presence of the dilettante Colebrookes, and the glitter of her diamonds procure an invitation in return. In Mrs. Longman Tompkinson, therefore, Lady Adelaide had the most vehement of partisans;—flying from house to house in a frenzy of enthusiasm for her wit, beauty, and accomplishments; and returning to deposit at the feet of her lovely patroness, the bouquet of nettles she had gathered for her in the shape of a thousand traits of Lady Wycombe's animosity.

The Darlings, with five daughters to marry, judiciously adhered to the Wycombe cause, as the safer side of the question. For Lady Wycombe was a woman congealed in the hardest frost of virtue; and there was a suffi-

cient certificate of moral excellence conveyed in the formal curtsey with which the countess honoured the family in society, to render them stanch in their opposition to the flighty Lady Adelaide de Vere. Since the arrival of Helmsley and Wroughton, indeed, poor Lady Darling half repented her demonstrations in favour of the enemy; wisely remarking to a singularly coincident husband, "that people have no business to indulge in dislikes or partialities who have a family to provide for."

The society of Naples, meanwhile, found its account in the feminine feud. Lady Wycombe, well instructed by London experience that popularity will not flourish except upon a diet of ices and lemonade, gave weekly *soirées dansantes* of considerable brilliancy. But balls are things of every-day occurrence during the carnival; and Lady Adelaide contrived, after the first two or three, to give the tone to a

general disgust for the heat, noise, and fatigue of such entertainments, as a prelude to the exquisite weekly concerts which Lord Portumna was commencing on Lady Wycombe's nights at the Embassy.

Let a private individual, whatever his rank, lavish his utmost cost and care, he will never succeed in producing any thing equal to a diplomatic fête. It becomes as much a matter of business as of pleasure, to crowd to the saloons of the ambassador of one of the higher powers; and when the king and queen, as a matter of foreign policy, honoured one of the musical assemblies of Lord Portumna with their presence accompanied by the whole court, (and just then all Naples was a courtier), the triumph of the Portumna party was complete. The temper of no woman of fashion, is proof against such a catastrophe. There remained but one resource. Lady Wycombe whispered to her

intimates, that she only hoped Lord Portumna would *marry* poor Lady Adelaide de Vere!—But even that usually successful hint, fell innocuous; even the conscientious Darlings, though they started at the implication, observed that however things might be, it was the duty of the English in a foreign country to attend the fêtes of their ambassador.

In vain did her ladyship condescend to the most pitiful resources. She would have visited, nay, have honoured with her countenance at dinner, the Longman Tompkinsons, for the sake of bribing away an adherent of her rival. But the Longman Tompkinsons stood stanchly by the visited of royalty.

The countess, at length, stooped to conquer by despatching an invitation to her *soirée dansantes*, through Alexis Bagot, to Sir William Helmsley and Wroughton.

"My dear fellow, I cannot think of accept-

ing it," replied Gerald. "I had not the honour of visiting Lady Wycombe in London; I cannot presume to make her acquaintance on the continent."

"But do you not see that the card is in her own handwriting?—It was quite a goodnatured idea of her own. Seeing you so often with the St. Pauls, she was afraid you would die no other death than that of the bored. Those people are so densely dull and commonplace—*si extraordinairement ordinaire!*"

"A thousand thanks!" persisted Gerald. "I am not a dancer, even in chilly England where one's blood requires to be circulated by exercise; and Naples is the last place under the sun or moon, where it appears advisable to increase the labours of life. Perhaps Helmsley will go.—Sir William, what answer to Lady Wycombe?"

"That I am engaged to Lord Portumna,"

answered Helmsley, a faint streak colouring his cheek. And Gerald was deeply gratified by this tacit declaration for Lady Adelaide; whom he sometimes feared was less a favourite than he could wish with his brother-in-law.

Never, however, had she appeared to greater advantage than since her exposure to the animosities of Lady Wycombe. Lady Adelaide had either the best temper or the best command of temper in the world. It did not appear in her nature to raise her voice, or indulge in an angry retort. She smiled at the bitter anecdotes related by the Longman Tompkinson, or replied by a brilliant glance of irony to the scarcely-concealed impertinences of Bagot; but Talleyrand himself could not have encountered the furious provocations of Lady Wycombe with a more steady impassibility. She neither chose to hear, see, nor understand the manœuvres of which she was the object.

Her mild courtesies towards her infuriated rival when they were thrown together in the narrow circle of the queen, might have sufficed to drive to distraction a more patient personage than the high-tory English countess.

CHAPTER XI.

On rit, on rit!—C'est une manière de pleurer.—C'est pour s'étourdir.

De Lesser.

One night, as Sir William sat enjoying the rare pleasure of solitude in his opera-box, which was usually crowded with the Italian friends of Wroughton, he was startled from his reverie by the sudden entrance of Sir Raymond Horton; of whom, considering their previous acquaintance, he had seen but little during his sojourn in Naples. Sir Raymond, the most efficient

man attached to the mission, was not often to be met with in society. His only *liaison* was with the family of the Duchess d'Ascoli, the favourite of the queen, and supposed to be of a political rather than a personal nature. For if it be the wisdom of the ambassador to stand well with the cabinet at home, it is the business of a secretary of legation to make for himself an opening into the mysteries of the land, through the favour of its powers that be.

"Any news?"—demanded Horton, after the usual form of inquiry of public men, who are the first to know every thing and the first to protest ignorance.

"Nothing that I am aware of.—Wroughton dined with Prince Guastalla, and I have not seen him since."

Sir Raymond was not listening for a reply. His glass was fixed upon the opposite box of Lord Colebrooke; in which, as usual, sat

Lady Adelaide, accompanied by the purblind, stone-deaf Neapolitan Countess Diodata Porro; and stood Lord Portumna, unaccompanied.

Helmsley, seeing the attention of his companion thus engrossed, turned his attention to the stage,—the *crocchio ristretto* of the house becoming at that moment hushed to listen to the touching mad scene of Pasta, in Anna Bolena; when suddenly, in the midst of one of the most thrilling passages, Sir Horton quietly demanded of him,—"Pray what is the rent-roll of Mr. Wroughton?"—

"Are you charged by some Italian beauty with proposals for his hand?"—demanded Helmsley in his turn, on recovering from his first amazement.

"No,—my inquiry regards his own interests."

"Perhaps you are going to offer him yours

with the foreign office, to get him appointed *attaché* here?"—inquired Helmsley, unable to consider the matter in a serious point of view.

"Still less. I am far from wanting a third sub, whose business would fall upon my shoulders. Harford is too rich to work,—Bagot too fine.—Young Wroughton would probably be too much in love."

"In love!—You asked me just now for news, my dear Sir Raymond; and it seems I have much to learn from yourself."

"You do not mean to say that, living in intimate confidence with Wroughton, you are ignorant of his passion for Lady Adelaide de Vere?"—

Sir William paused ere he ventured to reply. It had all but escaped his lips that men living in intimate friendship together, often know least of each other's affections. But he felt that the remark might savour of self-accusation.

"Gerald has never admitted to me any attachment to Lord Colebrooke's daughter," was his tardy reply.

"But you know it,—you see it,—you cannot possibly be blind to it.—*There*, look!—He has just come into the box. Observe with what ardour he addresses her;—see how consciously she receives him."

"But Lord Portumna, you perceive, remains,—shows no *empressement*,—and is treated with perfect *sang froid*;—and *he* also has the reputation of being attached to the lady."

Sir Raymond shook his head. "You are not so well acquainted as I am with the *dessous des cartes*," said he. "Accompany me half an hour hence to the *coulisses*; and you will see Portumna the centre of a group of the houris of that lawless paradise, yet wearing the same *insouciant* air. The Venus de Medicis, endowed with the wit of Madame de Sévigné, would not

rouse *him* from the well-bred apathy created by having been for twenty years an object of courtship. Portumna's irregularities are so soberly performed, that he is no subject for comparison with an honest, warm-hearted young man like Wroughton."

"Thank you!—He *is* all you say, and more. Gerald is a sterling fellow; and, since I needs must add it for your satisfaction, has an unencumbered estate in Northamptonshire of six thousand a year."

"Six thousand!—A comfortable independence; but scarcely enough, I think, to place him in danger. His income would render him a deuced bad attaché; but scarcely a better husband for Lady Adelaide de Vere."

"*If* he were sufficiently attached to make the offer," said Helmsley, doubtingly.

"*If*!—It depends far more on his rent-roll than his passion. With fifteen thousand,

Wroughton would be a lost man. Lady Adelaide would make him quite sufficiently in love, any day it suited her purpose. She is the sort of woman whom no living man could resist, at whose head she chose to throw herself."

"More dangerous, then, than I thought her. But since her spells are so potent, why does she not at once secure Lord Portumna?"

"*Secure* him?—Her object is to get rid of him!—Portumna's income amounts to little more than the interest of his debts; a charming person, I grant you, and with a fine position in society, but wholly unable to lose himself in matrimony. He must calculate to a guinea the value of his coronet, and try to get double the money for it, from a city heiress. But it is not of Portumna I am thinking. *Son excellence* is old enough and knowing enough to take care of himself; while Wroughton, or I am much mis-

taken, is young of his three-and-twenty years, and wholly at the mercy of a beautiful face with an ingratiating smile. It is for this I warn you!—The lad is in a fair way to marry Lady Adelaide de Vere, and to break his heart within twelve months of the marriage."

"I am at least obliged to you for your caution, though I feel it to be superflous," said Sir William, coldly.—"I will speak to Gerald, and—"

"Speak to him?"—cried the diplomat in consternation. "My dear fellow, are you mad,—or have you learned nothing since we parted at Eaton?—Speak to him?—not for worlds!—You would break the ice for him, and facilitate his confessions. No, no!—if you needs must talk, let it be *at* him!—Let him collaterally know that—"

The honourable secretary was interrupted,—Young Harford, having noticed the *entrée* of his *chef* into Sir William Helmsley's box, began to

consider the country baronet worthy his patronage; and with the instinct which marks the genuine bore, contrived to bestow his ever tedious company at the moment of all others when it could prove most tedious.

"How fine Rubini has been to-night!" said he, by way of a safe piece of criticism.

"Very!"—was the laconic answer of Helmsley; Sir Raymond not seeming to think the molten calf deserving a reply.

"How handsome Lady Adelaide is looking!" he continued, fixing his eyes on Lord Colebrooke's box,—"and how amazingly Wroughton is getting on with her. Ay, by Jove,—and Lord Portumna getting off!—Look!—he is making his parting bow.—The little Clotilda has a supper to-night."—

And his attention thus directed to the spot, Sir William was forced to notice that after his lordship's departure, the attentions of Gerald

were apparently received with double satisfaction.

"How astonishingly Wroughton talks!" observed Mr. Harford. "I can't understand how people can be at the trouble of saying so much, when there is really so little to be said. That is what is called having a fine flow of conversation; *I* call it an overflow."

"Quite right!" cried Sir Raymond, out of patience with his empty impertinence. "I recommend *you* to filtre;—a drop an hour is almost as much as we can swallow!"

"Are you going to Lady Wycombe's to-night?"—inquired the unabashed attaché, of Sir William Helmsley. "But I forgot!—I believe you are not of her set. I don't remember meeting you there. Bagot and I are pretty nearly the only English admitted to the house.

"Most others being of Helmsley's and my own opinion," added Sir Raymond—"that there

is no occasion to put up with pompous inanity beyond the limits of Grosvenor-square. Here, where one may enjoy the easy *laissez aller* of Italian society and the charm of such a coterie as Colebrooke's, we do not want to yawn away an evening in admiration of ceremony curtseying to ceremony, and vanity holding up her mirror to vanity."

"You remind me of my friend Sneyd's stricture upon the English," drawled Harford. "Sneyd swears that we abuse each other furiously so long as we are not acquainted; but that the moment we are formally introduced, we discover black to be white, and foul to be fair."

"Lady Wycombe's case must be a bad one then; since I, her first cousin, can perceive that black is black; while Helmsley (whom she has been trying this month past to cajole into her house) cannot discover a single white

streak in all the cubits of her ladyship's towering altitude."

And unable longer to support the society of one whose ignorance was the plague of his mornings, and whose impertinence the plague of his evenings, Sir Raymond rose and hastily quitted the box.

"The Pacha is in a bad humour to-night!" said Harford, quietly installing himself in the vacant place. "He could not stand what I said about Wroughton and Lady Adelaide."

"What particular interest has Sir Raymond Horton in either?"—

"None whatever!—The very thing that provokes him. Lady Wycombe assures me that some years ago (before I or Lord Portumna came to Naples) Sir Raymond, who was then only an unpaid attaché (poor fellow! you know, diplomacy is a profession to *him*), wanted to

marry Lady Adelaide, who encouraged, or pretended to encourage him. But, just as the business was drawing to a climax, there was a change of ministry at home, a change of ambassadors here;—Lord Portumna came, saw, and conquered;—and Horton has never forgiven either the lady or the lord."

Odious as was to Helmsley the *prétention* of Mr. Harford, he felt grateful for an anecdote which seemed to explain away the evident animosity of Horton to Lady Adelaide de Vere. Sir Raymond was probably still attached,—still jealous.

Helmsley had previously determined to come to some explanation with his brother-in-law; what he *now* heard, left him still undecided. To what, in fact, amounted all that was alleged against Lady Adelaide?—What had the worst of her enemies to urge against her?—Only those

indefinite "hums and ha's," the most mischievous and least authentic weapons of calumny:

> Something there was—what none presumed to say,—
> Clouds lightly passing as the summer day;

and vexatious as was the reflection they conveyed to all who were disposed to become the champions of so lovely a woman, Helmsley had found no opportunity or no courage to trace the evil to its source. The only positive accusation which had reached his ear, was her desertion of Sir Raymond Horton for a greater man, which rested on the testimony of a fool; and that she would now willingly renounce the impoverished great man for a rich, which rested on the accusation of Sir Raymond. Either might be mistaken, or both be actuated by personal motives.

But whether or not he brought the business

to an explanation, Helmsley felt it due to his brother-in-law to satisfy his own misgivings. He determined to interrogate Dr. Moorsom,—to frequent the society of Lady Wycombe,—to gossip with Mrs. St. Paul,—to leave, in short, no means untried to come at the truth. Gerald Wroughton must not be sacrificed to the manœuvres of a coquette; Gerald Wroughton must not become the *pis-aller* of one, however beautiful, however attractive, whose name had been coupled in the rumours of society with epithets of merited reproach. The brother of his beloved Marcella must be rescued at all risks, from a rash and hazardous connexion. Sir William flattered himself, that though the tie of guardian and ward had been of brief duration between them, he still retained considerable influence over the ingenuous nature of Gerald; and should the result of his inquiries prove unsatisfactory, doubted not that his

arguments might overmaster the attractions of the frail enchantress.

Good easy man!—As if all the wisdom of Solomon would avail the weight of a single grain of sand against the seductions of a beautiful and plausible woman!

CHAPTER XII.

You rock'd my cradle,—were my guide
In youth, still tending at my side.
But now, dear Sir, my beard is grown,
And I'm a child to you alone.

MARTIAL.

ANXIOUS and dispirited, Helmsley retired from the Opera before the fall of the curtain. On his return home, he found letters from England,—the courier having been delayed by the unfavourable state of the weather. The intelligence he received was cheering. His children were well and happy; a little letter in

the crooked handwriting of each, afforded ample confirmation of the sober commendations of Aunt Margaret.

But there was a passage in Emma Wroughton's epistle which startled him. After such details of their little family circle as might have been supposed to flow from the pen and heart of a mother, she proceeded thus.—"I am not satisfied, my dear brother, with Gerald's letters, or with the accounts that reach us of him. Mr. De Ligne informs us that he scarcely stirs from the house of Lord Colebrooke; and when I reflect upon the opinions entertained by dear Marcella of that family, I tremble to anticipate any nearer connexion. His own letters too,—so incoherent,—so wild,—so much at variance with the tone of his former correspondence, confirm my apprehensions; and were it not that you have never named these people, never even alluded to the name of

Lady Adelaide de Vere, I should give it up as a lost case. But living on terms of perfect confidence, you could not but be aware of the fact, were things as I fear; and would have interfered to save dear Gerald from the worst of destinies,—a marriage with a mere woman of the world.

"Still, my dear Helmsley, with all a sister's anxiety on so important a matter, I cannot but remember your studious habits, your abstraction of mind and fear that his danger may have escaped your notice. I call upon you, therefore, in my own name and that of one still dearer to you, to frustrate the plans of these people, and prevent so fatal a connexion; or, at least, direct your attention to his proceedings, and let us know with the least possible delay the extent of evil for which we must be prepared. Once his guardian, ever his brother, be still, I beseech you, his friend and councillor!—Remember,

we look for his happiness at your hands!—When you set off together on this ill-starred expedition, I would have given worlds to oppose the scheme; but with Gerald's health at stake, I dared not interfere. I felt, too, that you would be on the spot to watch over him,—to save his young and inexperienced heart and head from —— But enough of this! I will not detain you by the expression of fears which, after all, may prove absurd, and will try to banish them from my mind till I once more welcome your handwriting.

Your ever affectionate sister,

E. W."

"His brother,—his friend,—his councillor.—" The words appealed painfully to the conscience of Helmsley!—How had he fulfilled those trusts?—Of whom had he thought since his arrival in Italy, save of himself;—at first, a prey to selfish melancholy,—and now the victim of

equally selfish elation!—What proof had he given of that sturdiness of manly friendship to which he formed such lofty pretensions?—What had he done to estrange Gerald Wroughton from the influence of Lord Colebrooke's society and Lady Adelaide's attractions?—Nothing!—for he was a slave to them himself!

Helmsley was pacing the room with hurried footsteps, when this fatal acknowledgment burst from his lips. It was a confession he had scarcely dared to frame in the depths of his secret thoughts; yet now, it escaped his utterance. Yes!—he loved Lady Adelaide de Vere;—and it was this wild and inexcusable passion, which had deterred him from remonstrating with Gerald.—He felt that the jealousy of a rival, not the prudence of a councillor, would instigate his advice; and had too much generosity of mind to plead under false colours!

But Emma's letter recalled him to himself.

Emma's letter appealed to him in a name which was still sacred as ever in the holiest recesses of his heart, and determined him to throw off a degrading infatuation.

He knew that at that very moment Wroughton was at the Palazzo Balbi. Lady Adelaide and her father were in the habit of receiving company after the opera. He had the general *entrée* of the house; nor was the hour such as to render his visit extraordinary. Of late, indeed, he had studiously absented himself from society which he felt was becoming too dangerously dear; but Lord Colebrooke and his daughter had probably never noticed his absence and would be equally unobservant of his return. As if mistrusting his own courage, he would not wait for a carriage, but set off hurriedly on foot; and in a few minutes, was announced in the well-known antechamber. The sort of trepidation of which, for some weeks past, he had

been conscious, in approaching the presence of Lady Adelaide, overcame him with double force as he entered the saloon.

But in the first of the two drawing-rooms, there was only Lord Colebrooke's whist-table, at which were the Earl, Sir James Darling, an Italian Abbé, and the Princess Stradalla, with Dr. Moorsom and one or two Neapolitan noblemen looking on; while in a remote corner of the room, sat Mrs. Longman Tompkinson in vehement discourse with the Duke of San Magnanos, the Spanish ambassador; and as Sir William was proceeding to the inner sanctuary, the folding-doors of which stood open, he found himself plucked by the sleeve by the gorgeous lady of the looms.

"My dear Sir William, I am enchanted to see you,—I entreat you to come to my assistance!"—cried Mrs. Longman Tompkinson. "Do pray interpret for me a bit to his Ex-

cellency the Duke of San Magnanos, — (a grandee of the first class, you know, and the richest subject in Spain)," added she, in a whisper. "I have been trying to make him understand that if he should ever visit England, it will give Mr. T. and myself the greatest pleasure to see him at Stoke Park, or at our mansion in Carlton Terrace. Our mansion in Carlton Terrace is let for five years; but it is not likely the Duke will quit Naples within that time."

During this explanation, Mrs. Longman Tompkinson's hand was placed detainingly on the arm of the Spanish grandee of the first class, who was about to escape her; and Helmsley, compassionating his durance, repeated as succinctly as possible, the invitation which the "French of Stratford school by Bow" of Mrs. Longman T., had left somewhat problematical. The polite old man bowed low to Helmsley,—lower to the lady,—

and promised and vowed things which he knew he should never be required to perform.

"Pray explain to his Excellency all about Stoke Park!" cried Mrs. Longman Tompkinson, enchanted at the prospect of adding the name of a Spanish duke to a visiting list heretofore adorned only with the titles of a few damaged Irish peers. "Tell him it was built by Inigo Jones, and that the grand hall is painted by *Laguerre*."

"*Plait-il?*" demanded the deaf old Duke, fancying the latter word to allude to the affairs of Spain.

"There!—you see he is dying to know all about it!—Explain that Stoke Park was inhabited by the French princes after the revolution; which is a curious historical fact, as the Prince of Canino (Lucien Bonaparte that was) spent a fortnight there with Mr. Longman Tompkinson and myself last year."

Helmsley repeated as little of all this as would pacify the lady, but quite enough to tire the patience of the Duke; who had been listening to an unintelligible farrago for the last half-hour, concerning "*les états de mon mari dans l'Angleterre.*" But the politeness of a foreigner outlasts his patience; and the old gentleman, eager as he was to break away to the whist-table, kept bowing and smiling so complacently, that Sir William began to fear he should next be required to enlarge upon what he had often heard Mrs. Longman Tompkinson describe as the *goblin* hangings of her mansion in Carlton Terrace.—Fortunately, the conclusion of a rubber intervened; and the Abbé cutting out, the Duke was strenuously invited by Lord Colebrooke to cut in.

But the movement by which San Magnanos was released, did not admit of the escape of Helmsley. To leave the only lady in the room

sitting alone in a corner, was out of the question; and he was forced to take the vacated chair, and listen for the hundredth time to Mrs. Longman Tompkinson's description of the extent of her estates, the amount of game bagged at her last battue, and the square feet of glass in her pineries. Not a soul in Naples but could have set the *parvenue* lady right to a fraction, so well were they habituated to the recapitulation!

Luckily, she was not the woman to require an answer beyond an affirmative movement of the head; and Helmsley, having discovered that his position commanded a view of all that was passing in the inner drawing-room, was content to *seem* to listen and admire.

During his hurried walk, the impetuosity of feeling arising from the perusal of Emma's letter, had created a vague and involuntary prejudice not only against Lord

Colebrooke and his daughter, but all their society. Though not a single circumstance or peculiarity had ever struck him under their roof as indecorous or irregular, he now chose to imagine an immoral tendency in the whole coterie. There *must* be something wrong!—He was prepared to discover indelicacy and levity in all that met his ear or eye at the Palazzo Balbi.

On casting a hurried glance, however, into the adjoining room, the first object that struck him was Lady Darling, dull, cold, and upright as a statue of snow,—a sentence falling from her lips every quarter of an hour, with watchman-like precision, in answer to the lively sallies of Prince Guastalla who was making up to her eldest daughter, continentalwise, through the medium of mamma. Close beside her, were the frozen figures of the two girls, whom old Moorsom had deserted the whist-

table, now that its best player was gone, to beguile into a smile. A little further on, stood St. Paul, maundering old womanisms with the venerable Princess Sforza; while his wife sat distorting herself into a thousand attitudes, to withdraw the attention of Gerald Wroughton and Ottavio Sforza from Lady Adelaide de Vere. Helmsley could not but perceive how admiringly, passionately, the eyes of his brother-in-law were fixed on that faultless form; little suspecting that, while he gazed, his own were rapidly attaining a similar expression !—

It would have been difficult for an artist to conceive a face and figure nearer to perfection than that of Lady Adelaide; the most exquisite symmetry being animated by the most exquisite grace, and the utmost regularity of features enlivened by the brightest intelligence. But it was scarcely so much these endowments

as the charm of her manners which rendered her irresistible. The sweetest tones gave utterance to expressions ever kind or courteous. "Without one jarring atom formed," she seemed to personify all that is most attractive in her sex!—

As Helmsley sat, he could not catch even a murmur of her voice; yet the mutable countenance on which his eyes were fixed, seemed to reveal the graceful pleasantries with which she was parrying every extravagance that fell from the lips of Mrs. St. Paul; and striving to moderate the enthusiasm of Sforza and Wroughton at every retort which escaped her own. It was impossible to doubt that both these young men were her infatuated admirers; it was impossible to charge her with bestowing the smallest encouragement on either.

From his fit of abstraction, he was recalled by the monotonous chime of Mrs. Longman

Tompkinson. "For, as I was saying to Princess Stradalla before you came in, I am sure I cannot conceive what induces Tompkinson and myself to give up our comforts and luxuries (for I must do ourselves the justice to say that I don't know a house in London finished with such attention to comfort as our mansion in Carlton Terrace, doors listed and patent hinges down to the very butler's pantry),—to give it all up as I was saying, for a half-furnished barn of a barrack, they call a palace; without a comfortable chair to sit in or feather-bed to lie on! —To be sure the climate is superior.—But what signifies winter weather without, when one's comfortably lodged in-doors?—and as to spring and summer, I take it Old England has the best of it! Shall you be in town early in the season, Sir William?"

"Certainly—quite so—" replied Helmsley, whose faculties were again wandering.

"Oh! then,—I *must* insist on your noticing our house, the first time you drive through Carlton Terrace,—you will know it by the mahogany window-frames. The best-finished house there! The lamp-posts and doorway executed after Mr. Longman Tompkinson's own design!—There was a sketch of them in Somerset House, last exhibition, by a young artist whom Mr. Longman Tompkinson particularly patronizes. I am sorry I cannot obtain you a view of the interior; the house is let to the Brazilian Ambassador. I would not have accepted a commoner for tenant; for even when one *does* let one's house, one likes to know that things are done there in a certain style. However, if you are particularly anxious to see it (for I think I may say that the goblin tapestry is unique of its kind in London), perhaps Mr. Longman Tompkinson would not object to furnish you with a letter to ——"

Regardless of the interruption, Sir William could not resist the opportunity which now presented itself to make his way into the other room. The St. Pauls were moving. As they passed him, he rose in the midst of Mrs. Longman Tompkinson's harangue, to say good-night; and, with a slight bow to the astonished lady, proceeded onwards to pay his compliments to Lady Adelaide. But the chair occupied by Mrs. St. Paul was already seized by Prince Ottavio, and Helmsley, found himself compelled to fall back upon Lady Darling and her dummies: — still out of hearing of those who had attracted him towards the circle.

The quick eye of Lady Adelaide marked his discomfiture; as well as the alacrity with which he was seized upon by Lady Darling to become the auditor of those excellent theories of female education, with which she was in

the habit of favouring all the unmarried men in Naples.

"Pray admire," said Lady Adelaide to Wroughton, in Italian, "the patience with which your brother is undergoing his martyrdom. You, who have heard so much of the 'sweetness of my dear Maria's disposition,' and 'the mild retiring domestic character of my poor Fanny,' can enter into his sufferings."

"Sir William's ways of thinking resemble in so many respects those of Lady Darling, that he is less to be pitied than you imagine," replied Gerald. "Observe his approving bow in answer to her ladyship's last sentence!—I will answer for it she has been assuring him, as she constantly assures *me*, that her chief study on the continent is to keep her poor dear girls strictly English; that however

late the ball overnight, they rise at eight for family prayers; that their constitutions are secured from injury by an English cook in their suite, and their morals by never losing sight of an English governess. Of all this, I am quite sure, Helmsley is earnest in his approval."

"I always heard he was a pattern for country-gentlemen!" said Lady Adelaide, with a feeble smile "for whom Lady Mary Wortley Montagu condensed Lord Lyttleton's 'advice to a lady' into

> Be plain in dress,—be sober in your diet:
> In short, my deary, kiss me, and be quiet!

But since the Darling school is so much to his taste, why not decide between 'dear Maria' and 'poor Fanny?' The Darlings are of a highly respectable Yorkshire family—the match

would be very suitable,—all country baronets together!"

Without resenting the tone of disparagement used by his fair companion, Gerald contented himself with replying—"Poor Helmsley will never marry again. Helmsley is wedded to the grave. It is impossible for a man to be more passionately attached than he was to my poor sister."

"Your remark does not exhibit the knowledge of human nature for which I gave you credit," observed Lady Adelaide. "The man who has once loved *passionately*, will love again; the tendencies of his character ensure it. It is your plodding, moderate, matter-of-fact men, who are faithful through life and death. My right hand upon it, Sir William Helmsley marries again!"

"I doubt it,—permit me still to doubt it!" replied Gerald; "or, at all events, permit me

to assure you, that *at present* he has no eyes for living woman."

Lady Adelaide smiled incredulously.

"Were it necessary, I would stake my life," persisted Gerald, "that from the period of my poor sister's death, he has been scarcely aware of the existence of any other woman."

They were still conversing in Italian; and, at this assertion, Lady Adelaide exchanged a hasty glance with Ottavio Sforza, who immediately added, "In that case, and in society such as this, we are bound to consider him a very happy, because a very insensible man."

Wroughton, not noticing the inference, resumed in a lower voice, as if dreading to be overheard by the subject of their conversation,—"Your view of Helmsley's position is far more agreeable to me than my own; and I would therefore willingly adopt it. Nothing, I am convinced, would be so advantageous to my

little nephew and niece as the prudent re-marriage of their father."

"Provided the prudent marriage were also one of inclination," said Lady Adelaide, gravely. "But, in truth, no other marriage *can* be termed prudent."

Sir William, who was all this time intently regarding her little suspecting that he afforded the text of her discourse, could not but notice the sort of saddened expression which now overspread her countenance. He would have given much to approach and join in a conversation that seemed to be taking a serious turn. But the Darlings were departing. His aid was required in seeking tippets for "dear Maria," and cloaks for "poor Fanny;" and when he returned to the saloon, Wroughton himself was taking leave.

It had been his intention to seek some explanation from his brother-in-law, before

they parted for the night. But his spirits were now excited to a species of nervous tremour which he felt would unfit him for the task. He determined, therefore, to defer till the morrow the purposed inquiry; and place Emma's letter in her brother's hand as a plea for his interference. It was sufficiently mortifying that Gerald's reserve should have rendered such a proceeding necessary; but if displeased with Gerald, he retired to rest that night far more indignant against himself!

CHAPTER XIII.

Leon. Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?
D. John. Sir, they are spoken, and these things are true.
SHAKSPEARE.

SIR WILLIAM had forgotten that he was engaged to accompany St. Paul early on the following morning, on a drive along the coast towards Baiæ; and as the engagement was made between themselves only, he was vexed, on entering the britschka of the classic, to find one corner of it occupied by Mrs. St. Paul, her fur cloak and her affectations. He felt that they should have been better alone. If

St. Paul fell somewhat below the mark of agreeability as a companion, he was at least free from the bitterness which sometimes sent showers of sleet from between the lips of his wife.

"What a relief it is to see a well-appointed English carriage, after the wretched turn-outs for which one is obliged to be thankful in Italy," observed Helmsley, good-humouredly, —aware how much the St. Pauls prided themselves on the neatness of their equipage.

"We shall not dare appear on the Corso, with morning liveries in this unpretending vehicle much longer!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Paul. "The Schrams are arrived—to dazzle all eyes with the tinsel and gold-leaf which form the delight of rich Yankees and Bartholomew-Fair showmen."

"And who are the Schrams?"—inquired Sir William; "I never even heard of them."

"You are fortunate, then, in having lived out of hearing of the tin-trumpets of newspaper puffery," replied the lady. "The Schrams are New-York Newcomes, who have performed ko-too at the foot of all the thrones of Europe, saving that of England, where they know their pretensions would be weighed in the balance, and found wanting."

"Americans perform Ko-too?" cried Sir William. "Forbid it, shade of Washington!"

"The patriarch Schram is an empty, pompous fellow, bursting with the sense of his personal importance yet unable to forgive himself for not having been born a lord; who throws away his money, not like a prince but like a *parvenu*," added Mrs. St. Paul.

"Throw away the only thing that seems to have raised him in the world?—But what brings these people to Naples?"—

"A desire of smoking the calumet of

peace with another aristocracy," replied St. Paul. "Paris is their meridian; but having unexpectedly attained an accession of fortune, they wisely recollect that objects destined to shine in the celestial spheres are lost to mortal sight for a time before they reappear as constellations; and have therefore eclipsed themselves preparatory to future splendour."

"But though in eclipse, I suppose they will justify the adage by giving feasts for wise men to eat?—Such a man as Mr. Schram ought surely to be *l'Amphytrion où l'on dine*?"—

"He prefers balls. His guests come in finer clothes, and he is warranted in a more gorgeous display," said Mr. St. Paul. "I wonder to whom they will *accrocher* themselves in Naples?—Lady Wycombe, of course, is out of the question."

"Why out of the question?—I suppose she

is as accessible to flattery and subservience as the rest of the world?—It would not surprise me if she were to take it into her head to patronize these ultramarines, if only for the sake of enjoying the sense of her own superiority."

"It would be charity to afford a hint to Schram that he has only to declare war against Lady Adelaide de Vere, to be accepted as an ally of the Wycomites," cried Mrs. St. Paul. "By the way, we met Lady Adelaide as we were driving to your house."

"So early?"

"I fancy she had been to Santa Chiara, to see her little girl. I know she is only allowed to visit the child on appointed days."

Sir William was too much astonished for utterance. He felt persuaded that he had misunderstood Mrs. St. Paul; but it was im-

possible to require the repetition of a lady's words.

"Admire, I beseech you, the light which is now playing upon the Castello di Baiæ!" interrupted Mr. St. Paul.—"The ruin of which you catch a glimpse beyond, between the castle and the headland of Misenum, is the *Sepolcro di Agrippina*, the last existing record of a too gloomy tragedy!"

Sir William looked and looked, but saw nothing; not even the "bending of the shore" they were pursuing. There was a mist before his eyes.

And his ears tingled and his colour fled;

yet his lips recoiled from the interrogation which was bursting from the inmost recesses of his heart.

"Every road of the route we are traversing, is a site consecrated by history or song," resumed Mrs. St. Paul. "By looking back,

we catch a glimpse of the Scoglio di Virgilio fast by the ruins of the *marino* of Lucullus; and beyond——"

"Did I understand you to say the *daughter* of Lady Adelaide de Vere?"—suddenly interrupted poor Helmsley, unconscious of the wet blanket of erudition thrown over his impatience.

"Her little girl.—Miss Sherburne is only six years old you know, but I am told that she is already a perfect miniature of her mother."

"And Lady Adelaide openly avows and visits her?"—demanded Sir William, the blood boiling in his veins.

"Why not?—There is surely no necessity that her hatred of the father should extend to the unfortunate child?—I do not suppose indeed that she is one of your passionately tender mothers. But I conclude that

her motive for persuading Lord Colebrooke to return again to Naples, is that she may not altogether lose sight of the poor little thing. Old Lady Sherburne, you know, resides here. She has that beautiful villa I pointed out to you the other day on the other side of Pozzuoli. The dowager is legal guardian of the child; and being a stanch Roman Catholic, chooses her to be brought up at Santa Chiara."

"You will scarcely believe," said Helmsley, trying to force a smile, that, till this moment, I was not aware of the fact of Lady Adelaide being a widow!"

The St. Pauls were too well bred to exclaim, as Alexis Bagot certainly would have done, "My dear fellow, where have you lived all your life!"—The lady simply contented herself with replying,—"But who told you that she was a widow?"—

"I thought I understood"—stammered Helmsley,—more embarrassed than before.

"Lord Sherburne is not *dead*, you know," interposed Mrs. St. Paul. "As his widow, she would retain his name."

"But surely I have heard even yourself allude to her wish of marrying Lord Portumna?"

"Certainly,—I am convinced that such is, or was, her intention."

"But you say Lord Sherburne is still alive?"

"My dear Sir William,—where are your wits this morning?—Are you sporting with my love of gossiping; or can it be possible that you are in earnest, ignorant of what has rung from one end of Europe to the other;—the life and adventures, or rather marriage and divorce of Lady Adelaide de Vere?"

Sir William would have given much for the power of reply. His bosom throbbed tumultuously; but he was silent.

"She did not altogether, I think, live a twelvemonth with her husband," calmly observed Mr. St. Paul, with his glass still raised towards the surrounding scenery; "it was a most unlucky business!"

"More than *unlucky*, I should imagine!" gasped Helmsley, at length recovering his powers of utterance.

"Many people thought so, at the time," said the lady. "Lady Adelaide had of course her partisans, as a woman so eminently beautiful always must; but people in general—however—it is all *histoire ancienne* now!—There is no use in disinterring old grievances. Let us hope that her next marriage (whether with Lord Portumna or Mr. Wroughton), will be more auspicious than the first."

"Never!"—cried Sir William, with indignation. "I beseech you do not couple Gerald Wroughton's name with hers: I pledge my

life that my brother-in-law will never seek the hand of a *divorcée*."

"In uniting their names, I only follow the example of half Naples," said Mrs. St. Paul, pettishly.

"Who can be as well acquainted as I am with the principles of Gerald Wroughton?" cried Helmsley. "Had not my brother been as ignorant as myself of the real position of Lady Adelaide de Vere, he would never have afforded the remotest cause for suspicion that——"

"My dear, *dear* Sir William!" again interrupted Mrs. St. Paul;—"do not fancy the whole world so blind as you appear to have been yourself! Why it was when Dr. Moorsom was here three years ago with Mr. Wroughton, that old Lady Sherburne brought little Adelaide from England, to place her at Santa Chiara; and I have often heard Moor-

som mention how deeply his young charge, then in so delicate a state of health, was affected by the agitation into which Lady Adelaide was thrown by the arrival of the child."

"All this is so strange,—so incomprehensible to me!" ejaculated Sir William, after a moment's pause.

"I shall begin to think that the English coteries at Naples, which are reviled by the Italians for their addiction to *cancans*, are less guilty than I have often supposed them," observed Mr. St. Paul,—finding it impossible to win back the attention of Helmsley to his pedantic dissertations,—"since *we* are left to inform you of things with which I should have supposed you familiar before you had been eight-and-forty hours an inhabitant of the Chiaja."

"People would as soon have thought of telling him that Queen Anne was dead!" said Mrs. St. Paul, flippantly.

"If you wish to inform yourself more circumstantially," added St. Paul gravely, "you had better apply to Dr. Moorsom. Moorsom has been acquainted with the Colebrookes these twenty years. Moorsom is an unprejudiced man, — or perhaps a little partial in Lady Adelaide's favour. Dine with us to-day, and he will tell you the whole story."

But Sir William was under the necessity of refusing. He was engaged to the Duchess d'Ascoli, to whom he had been presented by their mutual friend Sir Raymond. Horton would probably be there. *He*, at least, was not prejudiced in favour of the delinquent; and it was from *him* that Helmsley determined to learn the worst that could be told.

He now became as eager to divert the conversation of the St. Pauls from Lady Adelaide as he had previously been to engage them to communication; and rejoiced when by dex-

terous inquiries and quotations, he contrived to concentrate once more the faculties of his classical companion upon Sibyls, Sirens, and Queen Dido, instead of the mortal heroine of the Palazzo Balbi.

But Mrs. St. Paul, the moment she perceived the gossipry of the morning to be at an end, grew languid and out of spirits; concealed a yawning fit under her embroidered handkerchief, and had frequent recourse to her salts bottle. When her husband insisted upon dragging Helmsley to explore the half-buried ruins of an amphitheatre, her shoes were too thin for subterraneous adventures; yet she was persuaded she should catch cold if left to wait for them in the open carriage. She played the fine lady, in short, so much to the purpose, as wholly to frustrate the object of their expedition, and determine their return to the city full an hour before Sir William had flattered himself he should be set at liberty.

It was some relief that Gerald was absent when he reached home. A note left on the table, apprized his brother that he dined early with the Colebrookes. The Palazzo Balbi had bespoken an old Italian comedy at the theatre of San Carlino, and were to attend with a large party; which he invited Helmsley to join on quitting the table of the Duchess d'Ascoli.

"The Duchess has invited a few eminent men expressly to meet you," said Sir Raymond, after Helmsley had paid his compliments to the handsome but somewhat formal mistress of one of the finest and gloomiest mansions in Naples. "She is expecting Berio (a very tolerable poet, for a lord,—except poor Byron's, few right honourable verses are worth their weight in chaff!) Delfico, the historian, and my friend, Salvaggi,—all agreeable men, whose acquaintance will do you honour."

Helmsley gave an involuntary sigh. His thoughts were with one whose acquaintance conferred little honour upon him, but infinite anguish;—even upon the fallen angel, whose ascendancy had so unsuspectedly obtained the mastery over his soul.

The tone of conversation during the stately banquet which soon followed, was such as at any other time might have excited strong interest in the mind of one who was somewhat more of a scholar than comported with his vocation of country-gentleman; and more bent upon improvement than most young men of eight-and-twenty, who have stagnated in the unstirring atmosphere of domestic life. But now, he could neither listen nor reply. Horton, who had announced him as an intelligent man, intent on literary pursuits, almost blushed for the apparent incapacity of his friend.

It was in vain that the polite Marchese Berio, hoping to stimulate the reserved stranger to conversation through the ready channel of national pride, made handsome reference to leading English authors of the day, to our reviews,—our journals,—our statesmen and historians.

"It surprises us untravelled and rarely locomotive Italians," said he, "who have no means of judging your countrymen in their own country, where, doubtless, they are studied to the best advantage, to observe the strange contrast between the gravity of purpose of your public men and writers of European reputation, and the class of English travellers with whom we become acquainted. I venture to say this, sir, to yourself, because our friend, the cavalier Horton has apprized us of the superiority of your understanding; and I am, therefore, convinced you will agree

with me, that the conversation of the English circles in Naples is more flighty and insipid, and their pursuits more trivial, than can well be accounted for. It is true, they are formed of the noble and the wealthy, whose habits are necessarily frivolous. But these very classes have furnished your greatest writers and greatest men."

"Our great men and writers are too busy in these stirring times at home, my dear marquis, to afford you an opportunity of judging of their colloquial qualifications," cried Sir Raymond, perceiving that Helmsley was unprepared with an answer. "Be so amiable as not to judge us after the cub-lords, dandies, and twaddlers, whom your climate and your San Carlos attract hither to flutter in the winter sunshine!"

"My dear friend," protested the Neapolitan, "we have had here, within these last few years,

several of your great modern authors; cold, silent men, who seemed to sulk with us for not speaking their language, while they deliver themselves in the French of a *laquais de place!* Gell, Mathias, and Landor, I admit to be exceptions; but these men are rather Italian than English. Your straight-from-London Englishman never appears to be in earnest; and as to the ordinary run of their lovely wives and daughters, they draw up in alarm if one ventures to ask them a rational question, and are to be propitiated only by some idle jest. They never converse like Frenchwomen, they never argue like Italians; their portion of dialogue invariably consists in exaggerated affirmation, or negation. Yet what wonderful women you have in your country!—One of the first astronomers, and one of the first political economists in the world!"—

"We choose to keep them there, lest you

should turn their heads by flattery!" said Horton, laughing.

"But you forget, my dear marquis, the charming Lady Adelaide de Vere," interposed the Duchess d'Ascoli, fearing from the uneasy look of Helmsley, that he resented the disparaging manner in which his countrymen and women were alluded to.

"No—I have not forgotten her," replied the old man. "She, I grant you, possesses a thousand graces of address. She can assume any tone of conversation, grave or gay, lively or severe. But she *does* assume it—it is plain to every nice observer that she assumes it. I have no conjecture what may be the real complexion of her character."

"That of a mere woman of the world!" observed Horton, in an under tone. "Any thing to serve the momentary aim she has in view."

"Admit, at all events," observed the duchess, touched for the honour of her sex, or conscious perhaps that she stood accountant for as great a sin,—"that *she* can converse,—that she has both intelligence and information?"

"Like most women of her rank in life, her information has been orally acquired. She knows every thing that is to be learned from conversation,—nothing that is to be learned from books; and I have observed that knowledge attained from the lips of others, passes out of our own without producing much impression on the mind. On what we read, we reflect; of what we hear, we talk. I conceive Lady Adelaide to be altogether superficial."

"Come, come, you are hypercritical," exclaimed the duchess. "Between over-reserve and over-loquacity, you are, indeed, hard to please."

"Not hard to please, but hard to be excited to enthusiasm," replied the old man, in self-vindication. "I admire Lady Adelaide as an ornament to society; but when you ask me to regard her with the adoration she is accustomed to command among the English, I answer that I cannot adore what I do not believe to be genuine. Were your idol what she appears,—were her words as sincere as they are agreeable,—she would be an enchantress indeed!—But I hear her talk scandal, toilet, and liberalism, with Madame De la Chuchotterie,—high toryism and *duro di schiena* with Madame Von Hardenstein:—saintship with Miladi Darling, and sinnership with Milor Portumna.—What am I to think?—*which* of all these am I to believe her vein of nature?"

"Believe her to be—

"Every thing by turns, and nothing long!"

said Sir Raymond; "and you will be nearer the truth."

"Then, with your forgiveness, I could as soon bestow my esteem on a weathercock!"

Helmsley was almost tempted to take up the cause of Lady Adelaide; but the shrewd glances emanating from the expressive eye of his diplomatic friend luckily restrained him from stimulating opposition by defence. He determined, however, to seize the earliest opportunity of referring his incertitudes of the morning to Sir Raymond; and having conducted the duchess from the dining-room to the stately *fauteuil* of her saloon, justified the charge so often brought on the continent against English gentlemen, of button-holding in a corner apart from the rest of the company.

"I want you, my dear Horton, to explain to me," whispered he, as soon as he had drawn his friend out of hearing of the others, "the

particulars of an absurd story I heard this morning from Mrs. St. Paul, about the marriage and divorce of ——"

"Not Lady Adelaide, again!" cried Horton, laughing. "Surely she afforded *pâture* enough for *mauvaises langues*, during dinner? But, with respect to the affair of her foolish match, I fancy the wrongs of the business are better known than its rights. She married Lord Sherburne at sixteen, to gratify her father, as she says,—to gratify her love of independence, as I believe; and, at eighteen, brought evidence before Doctors' Commons sufficient to set herself at still greater liberty, and consign her monster for life to a lunatic asylum."

"The divorce proceeded, then, from no impropriety of conduct?"

"Impropriety, my dear fellow, is a vague term. Though all the world considered Lord

Colebrooke justified in securing his daughter from the brutality of a madman, many people thought it a suspicious circumstance that a man so knowing as his lordship should have suffered his daughter to become the wife of a Roman Catholic peer by the mere ceremonial of the Protestant church, so as to leave her the possibility of divorce. The Sherburnes, you see, originally discountenanced the match, but left the poor fellow to his own devices; so that, though married according to the law of the land, the solemnization was nothing to him as a case of conscience. Altogether, there was something *louche* in the business."

"But had not the marriage been valid, there could have been no legal divorce?" argued Sir William.

> "In these sharp quiddets of the law,
> Good faith, I am no wiser than a daw,"

replied Sir Raymond. "I only know that the child is to inherit, and that Lady Adelaide is at liberty to marry again whenever she shall hit upon her dupe. And now let us join the duchess; who will fancy us to be plotting treason against the state, if we hide in corners and do not take her into our confidence."

Luckily the custom of the country sanctioned Sir William's early escape from the circle; for, with his head and heart pre-engrossed, it would have been difficult to justify the praises of his understanding by which his friend Sir Raymond had obtained access for him into the somewhat pedantic circle of the Duchess d'Ascoli. He took his leave, indifferent to the impression his incoherence and unsociability might leave on men, of whom, a few months before, he would have felt proud to cultivate the good opinion;

and arrived at home in time to acquire, by two hours of restlessness and self-reproach, the composure indispensable to the delivery of his remonstrances to his brother-in-law.

CHAPTER XIV.

Dans la conversation, chose si superflue et si nécessaire, les uns ne disent pas toujours ce qu'ils savent, les autres ne savent pas toujours ce qu'ils disent.

BOUFFLERS.

"AHA!—at home so soon?" cried Gerald, when, after having been long and impatiently expected, he entered the drawing-room. "I took it into my head that Horton would carry you off to his den, and tie you down in argument as he has often done my less worthy self, till the witching time of night."

"I left the duchess's before him. I wished

to be here in time to,—I was anxious in short to—"

"Is any thing the matter?"—cried Gerald, noticing the distempered look of the usually placid Helmsley. "Have you bad news from England?" he added, with a glance towards the half-open letter, which lay beside Sir William on the table.

"I have heard nothing likely to be new to *you*," replied Helmsley, with growing agitation. "Your sister is anxious about you, Gerald. *Her* anxiety has directed my own attention to things which might otherwise have escaped my notice. Read this!" he continued, placing Miss Wroughton's letter in her brother's hand,—"and then, if you can, relieve the agitation of my mind."

Wroughton, seizing the letter, hurried over the lines to which the finger of Helmsley di-

rected his attention. It afforded some comfort to Sir William to observe that, as he read, the colour with which his cheeks had been momentarily flushed, gradually faded; and that, as his mind became enlightened, it was restored to composure.

"He knows the worst, now," thought Helmsley. "He is aware of Emma's anxieties, and does not blench."

Gerald returned the letter without a syllable of comment.

"And what am I to say to your sister in reply?" demanded Helmsley, after waiting a few minutes, in hopes of some communication from his brother-in-law.

"I will write to Emma myself by the next courier," said the young man, in a grave manner.

"To myself, then, you consider all explana-

tion unnecessary?"—cried Helmsley, stung to the quick by this ungracious mode of excluding him from the family council.

"My dear Helmsley, what could I possibly tell you on the subject of which you are not aware already?"—said Wroughton, with some degree of irritation.

"I am aware of nothing!—Had it been left to *me* to answer Emma's letter, I could only have replied that your feelings towards Lady Adelaide de Vere or hers towards yourself, are as much a mystery to me as if I had never seen you in each other's company."

"Impossible!" cried Gerald. "No person can have been my associate as you have been, without noticing my unconcealed attachment. I have made no secret of my sentiments. I concluded that motives of delicacy alone prevented you from expressing your opinion on the subject. I concluded you saw as well as

the rest of the world, the whole extent of my passion!"—

"Motives of delicacy!"—exclaimed Helmsley. Had I been really aware of your infatuation, would any earthly consideration have prevented me from plucking you back, when I saw you rushing upon destruction?—No, Gerald!—Either by design or indifference on your part, I have been kept wholly in the dark!—Had I guessed—had I dreamed—that you entertained serious projects concerning this woman, I should have inquired—should have investigated. But believing that, were you seriously attached, your guardian and friend would be one of the first persons taken into your confidence, I left matters so entirely to chance, that it was only this morning I became apprized of facts of which I cannot but suppose you still ignorant,—the marriage and divorce of Lady Adelaide."

"I am aware of every incident of her life," replied Wroughton, calmly.

"And you would carry back as your wife to Wroughton Hall, to be the protectress of your sister and the successor of your mother, a woman branded with suspicions of the most detestable nature?—You would take to your bosom the mother of a child whose father is yet alive?—A woman haunted by disgraceful reminiscences—a woman who has figured before the tribunals of the country?"

"At present, I have made no engagement to marry Lady Adelaide de Vere," replied Gerald, startled but not convinced by the unwonted impetuosity of his brother-in-law. "If any thing could hurry me into precipitate proposals, it would be to hear her character unjustly aspersed by my family."

Sir William was silent.

"All that can be urged against her, *I know!*"

resumed Gerald. "With all the calumnies circulated concerning her, I am also acquainted. I have heard them from others,—I have heard them from herself. Before I ever saw her face, the history of her unfortunate marriage was recounted to me as a matter of conversation by Dr. Moorsom, who was intimately acquainted with Lord Sherburne, and absolves her wholly. Nevertheless, I owe it to you to avow that a certain repugnance arising from that connexion, has alone prevented my becoming her declared lover."

"How!"—exclaimed Helmsley. "You have made no declaration of your sentiments?—You are still at liberty to——"

"At liberty, according to the world's decrees, to quit Naples to-morrow without further explanation, and withdraw myself uncompromised from the society of Lord Colebrooke's family. But my own views on such points do not coin-

cide with those of the world. Though I have made no professions of attachment, my looks, my manners, my involuntary homage, can have left no doubt in Lady Adelaide's mind of the state of my feelings. And if Lord Colebrooke permits me to spend half my time in his house by the side of the most beautiful and most attractive of women, engaging her regard and luxuriating in her smiles, it is because he relies on the honour of an English gentleman not to excite expectations he has no intention of fulfilling."

"Lady Adelaide, then, returns your affection?"—

"I have no right to answer in the affirmative since I have never sought the privilege of aspiring to her love. But to *you*—my nearest connexion—I will not hesitate to own that did I suppose her indifferent, I should not devote

my life to her, or labour to overcome the prejudices created by her unhappy position."

"Which means that you know her heart to be your own!"

"I am not such a coxcomb as either to say or think it!" cried Gerald, with indignation. "No man has a right to pretend to such a concession, who holds back for the indulgence of his scruples. At the period of my first visit to Naples, from the very first week of my acquaintance with her, I became attached to Lady Adelaide. The circumstances connected with her marriage were then more fresh in public recollection than now. I heard her every where blamed, every where reviled. My friends and associates derided the idea of any man intending to make her his wife. It was this scorn and contempt, perhaps, which at that time helped to remind me that I was two

years younger than the object of my attachment; and I returned to England, determined to banish her from my mind for ever!"

Helmsley, who had been hitherto seated, rose, and involuntarily paced the room. Though striving to recall to mind the circumstances connected with Gerald's arrival in England, he could remember nothing likely to have excited the suspicions of Wroughton's sisters that he rejoined them with an engaged heart.

"I need not remind you, my dear brother," resumed Gerald, "that family events of an engrossing nature, left me little leisure for recurrence to the past. The illness and loss of our dear Marcella absorbed every thought of my mind; and when I returned to the busy world, the influence of Italy and Adelaide was so far suspended that I had sufficient self-command to make no inquiries respecting the family of Lord Colebrooke. I knew them to

be in England,—nay, settled within forty miles of Wroughton Hall, yet made no effort for the renewal of our acquaintance. Still, I hankered after Italy. The climate, I fancied indispensable to my health;—the associations—but why dilate upon it all!—I pledge you my word that in coming hither, I knew not she would be here. All I wished was to inhabit the spot where she had been,—where I had last beheld her,—last luxuriated in transitory visions of happiness. The rest, you know!—To have dashed away the olive-branch extended towards me, would have been sterner virtue than is to be expected of my age and nature. I accepted the civilities of Lord Colebrooke,—I revelled once more in the smiles of Lady Adelaide,—and became once more, and more than ever, her slave."

"And you intend to marry her?" demanded Helmsley, in a hoarse voice.

"At the first renewal of our intimacy, I heard and fancied that Lord Portumna was her accepted lover. I was soon undeceived. Portumna never has been,—never has sought to be more than the admiring friend of Lady Adelaide. Reassured on this point—(if I can say reassured, when in fact it was the supposition of her engagement which seemed to leave me at liberty to return to the house,) I gave myself up to my feelings. You, my dear Helmsley, are a philosopher. *You* are one who, having loved with all the sobriety of domestic tenderness, are insensible to every wilder passion. But ask any other breathing man, whether it were possible to live in yearly, hourly, familiar intercourse with a woman so exquisitely gifted, and restrain the impetuosity of a passion beyond—oh! *far* beyond the curb of human reason!"—

"I never ventured to doubt the attractions

of Lady Adelaide de Vere," said Sir William, with a guilty thrill.

"Give me credit, then, for some degree of moderation, when I assure you that I have strictly adhered to my resolution of watching every word, look, gesture,—and examining with scrupulous severity the opinions of the world as justified by her conduct. Had I found her faulty in a single particular, had I on any one occasion detected the slightest indication of levity in her mind or manners, as God sees my heart, I would have given her up for ever! —But all in her nature is bright and heavenly as the expression of her countenance; and—"

"And you are now resolved to make her the offer of your hand!" again interrupted Helmsley.

"I am!—but the period of probation is not over. We have always agreed, my dear Helmsley, to return to England the first week

in May. Lord Colebrooke, who will leave Naples about the same period, wishes that we should travel together; and it will depend upon the manner in which my proposals are received, on the eve of our departure, whether I accede to his request."

"We have two months reprieve then before us!"—was the involuntary exclamation of Sir William. "May I hold you pledged, my dear brother, that during that interval you will attempt no further explanation,—no further engagement?"—

"Here is my hand upon it!" said Gerald. "You have every right to exert your influence over my judgment. The more you frequent the society so dear to me, the better satisfied I shall be that you act without prejudice, and are unbiassed by the calumnies of the world. Lady Adelaide highly esteems you, and will rejoice to welcome you on more intimate terms to her fireside. If I do not yet

require you to love her as a sister, promise me at least that you will view her with the indulgence of a friend?"

Sir William found it impossible to utter a syllable in reply. He still held in *his* the hand extended to him by Gerald; and his own trembled so violently that, had not Wroughton attributed to the warmth of fraternal affection the uncontrollable emotion by which he was agitated, suspicions of the truth must necessarily have arisen in the mind of the young lover.

CHAPTER XV.

To court the great ones, and to soothe their pride,
Seems a sweet task—to those that never tried.

HORACE.

THERE are three classes of men morally distinguishable in that order of society which, by the courtesy of modern times, is termed THE Order;—those who live to act, those who live to read, and those who live to talk.

Lord Colebrooke was one of the latter. He was exclusively a man of the world. His duties as a legislator were fulfilled by sitting half an hour in the House previous to any great division, and talking over the debate

during the whole preceding and succeeding days at his club and dinner party. A saunter on horseback in the afternoon, and a rubber or two at midnight, filled up the measure of his London existence. Having lived prodigally from youth to middle age, talking of retrenchments which he had not the energy to put in practice, he was now forced to economize his way down the hill of life :—the extravagance of his eldest son superadded to his own, having heaped Ossa on Pelion in the accumulation of the debts of the family.

His lordship accordingly drew in. He now played twenty guineas on the rubber, instead of fifty; and had engaged a *chef* at two hundred per annum, instead of four. But the chief indication of Lord Colebrooke's pauperism was the necessity of spending his winters on the continent, to escape the onerous hospitalities of Colebrooke Castle or Woodland's Lodge;—

and the worst privation he experienced in these annual banishments, the loss of that ever-flowing course of small-talk, which enlivens the revolving coteries of the country-house, the star-gazing circles of Brighton, or the select vestries of St. James's Street and Pall-Mall.—

What cared he for the *on-dits* of Naples? With the exception of Lord Portumna, there was not a soul in the place to sympathize with his curiosity respecting vacant regiments or vacant mitres,—the disposal of the ribbon of some expiring peer,—the ayes of a majority, or the shufflings of the back stairs!—There was no one at Naples who played his stake; there was no one at Naples who could converse with him in the sort of telegraphic London jargon, which communicates, from one noble signal-post to another, the small gossip of the great world; and it was a toil to talk to people of the *lower*

world, for whose dulness it was necessary to cross his Ts, and place a dot over every I!—

With the inanity of young Wroughton indeed he bore patiently, in the hope that he was to become the husband of his daughter; but it was a sad sacrifice to relinquish the society of Lord Portumna, — whom he had tact enough to perceive must be a less frequent guest at the Palazzo Balbi, to give free scope to the pretensions of the esquire of Wroughton Hall.

"We have had an amazing dull winter here!" observed his lordship to Sir William Helmsley, while waiting to make up his nightly rubber on the evening succeeding the explanation between the two brothers. "I was saying to my daughter this morning, that Naples is no longer the place I remember it."

"To me, it has all the charm of novelty,"

answered Helmsley. "I usually pass my winters at my country place; and have rather to blame the too much than too little society I find assembled here."

Lord Colebrooke slightly shrugged his shoulders. "But we have positively *nobody!*" said he. "Some years ago, there was so little stirring in England that people came to the continent for two or three years, and one of their seasons was necessarily spent here. Now, every man must be at his post,—every man must have his hand on the oar; and they have only time to run over to Paris, and back for the meeting of parliament. Americans and English nonentities are the only persons who have leisure for a winter at Naples."

"We have some Americans just arrived," interposed Wroughton, alarmed lest his grave brother should be disgusted by the hoary levity of his future father-in-law, "who write them-

selves down somebodies. Moorsom, my dear friend, if you can take your spectacles off the Diario, pray come and tell us what the Schrams are going to do for our entertainment!"

"Hire Vesuvius for the centre of the supper-table, and clothe a regiment of lazzaroni to officiate as their guard of honour," replied the doctor, with becoming gravity.

"Why exaggerate?"—cried Mrs. St. Paul, stopping short in the midst of her gentle prattlings with Lady Adelaide. "Why try to make them more ridiculous than they are?—I am sure they are as absurd as heart can wish!"

"They appear to be goodnatured people," remonstrated the mild voice of Lady Adelaide. "We must forgive some outbreak of vanity in people who have attained sudden wealth, and possess limited opportunities for display. All they do by way of attracting our attention, is to

spend. Surely they might find more objectionable modes of obtaining notoriety!"

"Certainly, certainly!" cried Moorsom, readily backing the fair apologist; "and if they limited their prodigality to buying up cabinets of modern antiques, or the copies of our friend Princess Stradalla for Raphael and Correggio, there would be no great harm done. But unluckily there is a wondrous power of sympathy in vanity and folly. These Tompkinson-Longmans, or Longman-Tompkinsons, for instance, have been as quiet as mice among persons with whom it was impossible to contend in rivalship, inasmuch as they put their trust neither in chariots nor in horsemen, nor parks, nor mansions. But the moment the Schrams set up their golden image, Mrs. Carlton Terrace's idolatry waxed hot within her; and she has ordered a set of new liveries, and is going to send out cards for a *bal masqué*, or *costumé*, or a *carrousel*, or some tomfoolery or other."

"How ill-judged!" observed Lady Adelaide. "How uncalled for! How far wiser would it be, if travellers left the toil of costly entertainments to their ambassadors. The continental nobility, in Italy more especially, are unable to compete with us on equal terms; and it is the splendour of our dress, equipages, and fêtes, which determines them to close their doors against us. It is too mortifying to their national pride to be constantly eclipsed on their own territories."

"*D'autant plus*," observed Dr. Moorsom, "that they really *have* something to offer in exchange for the pomp and show in which they are deficient;—an easy, well-bred tone of society, never very exciting, I admit, but calculated to spread an agreeable varnish over the rough surface of human life."

"The natural consequence of a self-concentrated aristocracy!" said Lord Colebrooke, "which admits no intrusion of extraneous

members. I remember the days of the Petit Trianon and Versailles, when society in Paris resembled the society of to-day in Naples. The utmost strictness of caste prevented the jealousies, competitions, and mutual contempts, arising between a wealthy *bourgeoisie* and impoverished nobility."

"Some sacrifice of wit, gaiety, and intelligence, being compounded for in both instances, to secure a level and harmonious texture," interposed Dr. Moorsom.

"No!" persisted Lord Colebrooke. "*I* perceive no sacrifice on any side. The reserve of Englishmen (which prevails rather in the second than the first class of society), is attributable to the promiscuous nature of our associations. The attainability of public distinctions by men of talent of any class, and the extraordinary accumulation of mercantile

wealth, necessarily destroy the exclusivism of the English aristocracy; and our uncertainty concerning the origin and habits of those with whom we are brought into contact, by occasioning a continual apprehension of wounding the self-love of others by some casual remark, produces consequent reserve. Placed between two strangers at the table of one of my country neighbours, I discover that one is a legal dignitary, the other a member of parliament. How am I to guess (when indulging in a diatribe on the peculations of servants), that my friend on the right hand is the son of my father's butler; or (when discussing the abolition of slavery) that my friend to the left is a sugar-baker in Bucklersbury? I speak daggers, most unintentionally, to both; and leave on their minds an impression that I am an insolent, ignorant brute.—Henceforth, there is war

between us.—I have bruised their head, and they will take the first opportunity to fasten upon my heel."

"True; but posterity will be the gainer. Your lordship's son, and the son of the solicitor-general, will be nearly on a par; *their* sons, perhaps,"—the doctor paused. It was not for *him* to prophetize that in the third generation, the balance of the scales might be reversed. Lady Adelaide, guessing his embarrassment, came to his assistance.

"An apprehension of being misunderstood certainly keeps people silent, who would otherwise cheerfully converse," said she; "and an universal language is impossible among persons of opposite views and incompatible situations. In England, how much stress is laid upon manners;—how apt people are to arraign others as vulgar and ill-bred!—*Here*, one never hears the whisper of such an accusation, because every

one in society is on a par; every one has been brought up on the same system, in the same habits of life. All have definite places, all adhere to them. Pretension or *hauteur* are out of the question."

"How amazingly poor Princess Stradalla will be outblazed by the gaudy liveries of the Schrams!" said Mrs. St. Paul, who thought Lady Adelaide and her father extremely prosy. "I am told they raise the price of gold lace wherever they go."

"I thought the sturdy Americans despised such gaudy distinctions?" said Sir William.

"Not in Europe," replied Dr. Moorsom. "Schram found himself so often mistaken for one of the 'helps,' and the head help was so often spoken to for his master, that in self-defence he was obliged to hang out the ensigns of feudal life."

"Princess Stradalla (whose grand apartment

they have hired), declares that instead of having the carriage at the door at a certain hour, they have always a stand of carriages in waiting, open, shut, coaches, chariots, caleches, cabriolets, ready to answer their call, or that of their hangers-on; beside saddle horses *à discrétion* for the use of their morning visiters," observed Mrs. St. Paul.

"What pure philanthropy!" cried the doctor.

"Excellent policy in Paris, perhaps," observed Lord Colebrooke, "where the misfortunes and impoverishment of *la haute noblesse*, have stripped the spunging system of a portion of its dishonour. The old emigrant dukes and marquesses who in their youth gambled away the pocket money so splendidly allowed them by Lord Moira, do not blush to fawn and prey upon the Schrams. *Here*, people are of a different way of thinking. The Neapolitans will

overreach brother Jonathan, if they can, in the sale of a picture or antique; but they will not stoop to pick up the crumbs that fall from his table."

"Let them overreach Schram, if they can!" cried Dr. Moorsom, laughing. "'They need ha' long spoons to sup with the de'il!' The old gentleman has still enough of the pettifoggery of the Broadway about him to be a sharp hand at a bargain!"—

"I confess it would give me no pain to find that he was overreached," observed Gerald Wroughton. "Wherever this man goes, he purchases whatever is most costly, not to gratify his individual taste, but to exhibit the length of his purse; and when people bring their vanity into the market with all the streamers of its ostentation flying, they mark themselves out for dupes!"

"I am sure the balls and concerts with

which they threaten us, will be a horrid bore, and cause a total break up of society!" said Mrs. St. Paul, languidly, drawing her cachemere more closely over her shoulders. "I hope they won't expect one to go to them? Dr. Moorsom, pray make Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson understand that she need not count upon *me* for any thing of the kind."

"My dear madam, I do not undertake to furnish Mrs. Carlton Terrace with understanding," replied the blunt doctor; and a conversation ensued between him and his patient, to which Helmsley found it impossible to give his attention. His eyes were irresistibly attracted towards the table where Gerald and Lady Adelaide had established themselves at chess.

There was something domestic in their attitude which displeased him. Although placed so close beside the circle as to take a share in the conversation, they had means of

addressing to each other by-words and comments, unheard by the rest of the party, and of interchanging glances more eloquent than words.

With her long hair simply parted on her forehead and twisted into a knot,—attired in a dress of dark velvet, which imparted a rich contrast to the dazzling whiteness of her shoulders and of the ungloved arm resting on the edge of the chess-table,—without an ornament,—without an affectation,—Lady Adelaide presented a realization of the ideal of some poet's or artist's dream. It was beauty of the highest order,—of form, of colour, of expression; it was beauty which caused the heart of Helmsley to sink within him, when he reflected how soon he might be brought within hourly peril of its charms;—and at the cost to Gerald Wroughton, of what fearful hazard of happiness!—

Short as was the period since he had shrunk

from the self-avowal of a passion which he felt to be unhallowed and degrading, Helmsley now gave himself up to the consciousness of his enthralment. So is it ever with a lover!—Closing his eyes and mind far longer than reason can justify against conviction of the growing evil, the moment when, by some sudden and inexplicable impulse, he exclaims in the secrecy of his heart, "I love," is the last in which he attempts to struggle against his passion. When once the slightest crevice is opened, the embankment gives way at once before the impetuosity of the torrent.

He no longer attempted to avert his impassioned gaze from the fair mischief before him; no longer sought to put harsh constructions on her sentiments and actions. At times, he persuaded himself that it was for Gerald's sake he devoted himself to the contemplation of his future sister-in-law; but oftener still, truth

prevailed over his sophistry; and alone with his conscience, he admitted with varying complexion and hurried respiration, that he was no longer master of himself,—that a spell had enthralled his destinies,—that the tranquillity of his life was broken up for ever,—that he existed but in the presence of Lady Adelaide de Vere!

Nor was he sufficiently a hypocrite to frame his answer to Emma Wroughton in terms to suit the tenour of her sisterly scruples. He admitted his knowledge of Gerald's attachment; he admitted his belief that no man honoured by the smiles of Lord Colebrooke's daughter was likely to withdraw his allegiance; and after fairly stating the engagements he had exacted from his brother-in-law, entreated that Emma and her aunt would rather prepare themselves for a more lenient judgment of their future relative, than anticipate the slightest advantage from delay.

CHAPTER XVI.

Là, tous les soirs, la troupe vagabonde
D'un peuple oisif, appelé le beau monde,
Va promener de réduit en réduit,
L'inquiétude et l'ennui qui la suit.
Là sont en foule, antiques mijaurées
Disant des riens d'un ton perroquet
Lorgnant des sots, et trichant au piquet.

VOLTAIRE.

His mind thus unburdened of a portion of its grievances, Helmsley strove to relieve his irritation by rushing into the flurry of dissipation by which Naples was, at that moment, opportunely agitated. But recklessness came

not at his call!—Though he had no longer patience for the plaintive valetudinarianisms of Mrs. St. Paul or leisure for the gentle dulness of her husband, he found it impossible to chime in with the rattling unmeaning hilarity of the set which had been attracted from Rome by a rumour of the projected fêtes of the Schrams and Longman-Tompkinsons. There were balls, masquings, charades, tableaux, going on all the seven days of the week; but though he hurried from one house to another, to gaze upon the same unmeaning faces and give ear to the same unmeaning ejaculations, the movements which he trusted would exhaust his irritability of body, served only to stimulate his irritability of mind.

If the insipidity of Lady Darling's daughters, and the languid inanity of Moorsom's fair hypochondriac, had enhanced the dignified simplicity and clear intelligence of Lady Adelaide,

what far higher relief was now afforded to her merits, by contrast with the purse-proud fussiness of the Schrams, and the noisy frivolity of the flight of summer swallows which had migrated to twitter in their sunshine!—Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson, apprehensive of being outglittered in a single spangle, by the gilt gingerbread of the Broadway, was labouring like a recruiting-sergeant to increase her forces, with favours flying and beat of drum; while curiosity to ascertain whether the high mightinesses of the New World ate with their fingers and dieted their guests on pumpkin-pie, attracted the untravelled and unenlightened nobility of Naples to the balls and dinners of the Schrams, and policy engaged the *corps diplomatique* to fraternize with the transatlantic colony.

"*We* intend to stand by the Tompkinson woman!" said Alexis Bagot to Helmsley, as

they were riding home one day together from the Corso.

"By *we*, meaning the mission?"

"Oh dear, no! — I know nothing about school during play-hours. Portumna, you know, is a sort of person to go any where he is likely to be amused,—whether to laugh *at* or *with* his entertainers;—Horton is a galley-slave who stirs only as pleases the duchess, to whom he is chained;— and Harford, of course, follows Portumna, like the shadow of a shade. All three will become Schrammites. But *we* adhere to the Tompkinsons!"

"I am to conclude, then, that to realize the number of your pronoun, you write yourself '*we*, Alexis Bagot?'"

"No, I speak in the name of my set. Lady Wycombe cannot endure these half-horse, half-alligator monsters. Madame de la Chuchotterie comes to her every day, with proposals of al-

liance; undertaking that she shall make out the list for their next ball, and order them a dessert service at the royal manufactory emblazoned with whatever coat of arms she chooses to assign them. But we are cruel!—What do the Colebrooke party intend to do?" he continued, coming at length to his point. "What has Lady Adelaide decided?"

"I have never inquired," replied Helmsley. "Conduct herself, I presume, with her usual judicious good-breeding; neither make a favour of going, nor a merit of staying away."

"The world, then, is right in its conjectures?" cried Bagot. "Wroughton *is* engaged to marry the fair *divorcée?*"

"From what do you draw your inference?" demanded Helmsley, striving to speak with composure.

"From the eagerness of your defence. I

never heard you so strenuous before. You are pleading the cause of a sister-in-law."

"I am pleading the cause of a very charming woman."

"On second thoughts," interrupted Bagot, caring very little for the motives or opinions of his companion,—"Lady Adelaide certainly will *not* coalesce with the Schrams. Portumna has taken them up as vehemently as he takes up all such showy novelties; and it is their cure just now, you know, to fight under different banners."

"Indeed I know nothing about the matter!" cried Helmsley, with rising indignation.

"Portumna is too much a man of the world to interfere with a lady's prospects; for *entre nous*, old Colebrooke, who is wretchedly out at elbows, only waits to get rid of his daughter to break up his establishment. Portumna is not, by fortune or inheritance, a

marrying man. It would be most unfair to stand in Lady Adelaide's light, being, as it is, her last glimmer. I must do Portumna the justice to say that he is the best bred man in Europe.—Injudicious though,—vastly injudicious!—As Lady Wycombe says, his system has always been *sens dessus dessous*. When a mere *attaché* and his business was to play the agreeable, he chose to ruin himself by giving the best dinners in Europe; now that he is ambassador and his business is to give the best dinners in Europe, he fritters away his life in making himself agreeable!—Do Wroughton's estates lie in a hunting country?"

"Within reach of two of the best packs in England," replied Helmsley, much surprised. "Why?"—

"I was wondering whether there would be any apology for a long winter visit from his

Excellency. We should not be sorry to have our next carnival here to ourselves."

Nettled by the flippancy of his companion, Helmsley seized the first pretext to ride on. But it was not so easy to leave behind the vexatious reflections arising from the disparagement he found universally coupled with the name of the Colebrookes. Small as was his experience in the levity of tongue prevalent in fashionable society, he knew that the really excellent are never wantonly attacked; that it is only the infirm and defective of the herd who are made a prey of by the rest. Often, when smarting under the insinuations he heard thrown out by Horton and others, he resolved to appeal anew to the good sense of Gerald Wroughton, and implore him to renounce a connexion so fraught with dishonour. But an hour spent in the saloons of

the Palazzo Balbi sufficed to renew his irresolution, by bringing it home to his conscience that, encouraged and favoured like Gerald, like Gerald he should become the most infatuated of lovers.

Distinguished at all times by the gentle suavity of her address, Lady Adelaide appeared inspired by a yet more feminine softness by the attachment to which she was evidently giving way. Few women were likely to have received such attentions as those of Wroughton with indifference. Eminently handsome, his countenance was the variable index of a lively mind. Inferior to Helmsley in information, he possessed that happy talent of knowing what to say and saying it at the right moment, which throws the slow-paced pedant into despair. While Helmsley was screwing up his courage or St. Paul hunting out appropriate words for a speech, Gerald never failed to call up a smile

into the countenance of Lady Adelaide by some spirited sally, or excite her curiosity by some well-timed anecdote. He was endowed with the *esprit de conversation* in which his countrymen are so generally deficient.

But it was less his power of amusing Lady Adelaide which excited the jealous pangs of Sir William, than his admission to the still more flattering distinction of sitting by her side in moments of sadness and abstraction. From his own box at St. Carlos, Helmsley often tortured himself by watching the sympathy of silence with which the lovers listened together to the touching strains of the "Othello," and "Medea." They seemed perfectly to understand each other;—they seemed already prepared for the heart-in-heart collision of a life of domestic happiness!

Sometimes, rousing himself from the reveries produced by such a picture, he would intrude

upon their happiness, as if in vengeance; and it almost provoked him to observe with what courtesy his appearance was welcomed by Lady Adelaide, as if admitting *his* claim to be there as one of the nearest relatives of her future husband. She would invite him to the seat by her side; address him in her softest tones, with utmost blandishment; defer to his opinions,—draw out his conversational powers,—applaud his sentiments,—rejoice in his pleasures; talk to him of Northamptonshire—of his home, his children, his return to England,—till her gracious interest almost tempted him to execrate her in return!—He could not bear to know that he was indebted to Gerald for the melting glances that reposed with almost sisterly affection upon his face; for the graceful gesture that seemed prepared to admit conviction, ere half his argument was unfolded; for the

conciliatory expression, for the deprecating smile!

Disquieted and ill at ease, how often did he wish that he had never been tempted to visit Naples; that he had never been admitted to the companionship of Lady Adelaide!—"Had I known her only as Wroughton's wife," he would exclaim, in his solitary strolls amid the shrubby steeps of Pozzuoli, "she would have produced no other impression on my mind than regret that a woman of doubtful reputation should have been forced upon the adoption of the family. But *now*,—when—*when* will my better reason overcome the hateful enchantments with which she has stirred my spirit to this mood of madness!"—

He determined, at length, to return no more to the Palazzo Balbi; to greet the beautiful offender with courtesy when chance should bring them together in society, but expose himself no further

to the dangerous charm of her familiar conversation.

But from the moment we rivet round our necks the badge of bondage to society, our servitude is complete. It was no longer possible for Helmsley to withdraw from his accustomed haunts, unless on the plea of indisposition; and as yet, the fever of his soul produced no visible signs upon a countenance bright with the hues and animation of health. There was no pretext to be made to Gerald for confining himself to the house; none to be made to those who met him in his daily ride, for secluding himself from their nightly-recurring entertainments.

One evening, as he was preparing to quit the St. Pauls on learning that Lord Colebrooke and his daughter were expected, he was caught at the door by Dr. Moorsom, with proposals that he should join a large party of Englis'

gentlemen, who, on the first favourable change of weather, were to make the ascent of Vesuvius; and ere the good doctor had finished his proposal or relinquished his button, Lady Adelaide de Vere was beside him.

"The very person we wanted to see!" cried Gerald, as he followed the Palazzo Balbi party into the room; and that word "we," spoke daggers to the ear of Helmsley, who was already attempting his escape.

"Lady Adelaide had almost made up her mind to write to you," he continued, laying his hand on the sleeve of his brother-in-law, and drawing him back into the room. "She wants to ask you a favour. Nay, do not look so magnanimously stern, or I shall be afraid to follow up my request."

"I trust my severity is not very appalling," replied Sir William, with a smile that greatly resembled a sneer. "What does her ladyship require of me?"

"This is worse and worse!" cried Gerald. "You alarm even *me!*—I will leave you to 'her ladyship,' and see what power of fusion lies in her smile. To *me* you are likely to be unbending as iron."

Sir William again made a movement to leave the room, muttering something of being engaged to Princess Sforza.

"Princess Sforza?" exclaimed Moorsom, who was still standing within hearing of the two brothers. "My dear sir, you are dreaming! The princess has been dining here; Thursday is her night for receiving." And Helmsley, thus convicted, was forced to remain.

"And how goes on the Petrarch group?" continued the doctor, addressing Gerald. "Are you still obliged to put up with me for your Cardinal Colonna, for want of a better?"

"We can do nothing till we have Helmsley's answer," replied Wroughton, "and neither Lady Adelaide nor I have courage to make the proposition."

"Courage?—Pho, pho, pho!" cried the doctor. "My dear Sir William, there is a great honour designed you by the handsomest woman in Naples; and my young friend pretends to be afraid of breaking the news to you, lest your joy should be too overpowering. We English feel ourselves bound to muster strong in favour of Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson and her *bal costumé*. The woman is a bore,—her ball a greater; but it will not be fair to let the Yankees beat our countrywoman out of the field,—which, by the way, is to be a field of the cloth of gold."

"I never go to fancy balls," observed Helmsley, beginning to suspect his drift. "I do not

make a greater jackanapes of myself than I find absolutely necessary."

"Hallo—hallo!"—cried the doctor, good-humouredly. "This is bearing down upon us with a vengeance!—This is throwing down the gauntlet to a brigade at a time!—Why we are *all* going to make jackanapeses of ourselves.—I, old Martin Moorsom, among the rest, though in my five-and-fiftieth year: and what business have *you*, pray, at less than thirty, to be wiser than all the world?—Come, come!—relax!—relent!—Lady Adelaide, who is to be our Madonna Laura, will hear of no other Petrarch than yourself. I heard her reject your brother Gerald Wroughton there, and your friends Sir Raymond and St. Paul."

Helmsley was becoming every moment more and more embarrassed; and his confusion was at the utmost, when Lady Adelaide, advancing towards him with the grace so peculiarly her own,

modestly and mistrustingly preferred her request. "At the general desire of their Italian friends," she said, "she had undertaken to get up a group, including the more illustrious contemporaries of Petrarch; Princess Stradalla having insisted on providing her a costume after a celebrated original portrait of Laura de Sades, in the Stradalla gallery; but it was impossible to proceed with the project till she had secured for the part of Petrarca, some English representative,—some English *friend*,—with whom she could, without impropriety, venture on so public an exhibition."

Predetermined on refusal, Sir William had scarcely patience to allow her to proceed to the end of her explanation. He wished to spare Lady Adelaide the humiliation of fruitless entreaty. But in the course of the siren's address, there was so much gentle hesitation, so manifest a fear of giving offence, so humble a conscious-

ness that she was taking a liberty with one of so grave a character as Sir William Helmsley, that her varying colour and faltering voice seemed to endow her with a thousand new and irresistible charms. All the apology, therefore, that the bewildered baronet could find to stammer in reply, was an assurance of his inadequacy to support the part, on account of his imperfect knowledge of the Italian language.

"Come, come, my dear good sir, we shall hardly admit of that evasion," cried the doctor. "At a fancy-ball, people are required to charm the eye and not the ear; we are only asked to 'look delightfully with all our might,' and hold our peace. You are the very man for our money!—Ottavio Sforza will desire nothing better than to fit you out, in compliment to his sister's picture; and we are to be grouped together by the young artist who is copying the Pompeii frescoes for St. Paul. All that remains

for your ladyship is to curtsey your thanks to Sir William Helmsley for his amiable acquiescence, and smile away the few remaining scruples that darken his brows."

Lady Adelaide did as she was required. But she contrived to throw so much cordiality into her thanks, and to suggest the extreme caution to which she was compelled by the peculiar delicacy of her situation, till Helmsley was alternately gratified by the compliment of her choice, and humbled by the tacit admission that he was reckoned the least dangerous man in Naples.

Meanwhile he was fairly embarked in the scheme. Disinclined as he might be to engage in similar levities, he was ashamed to recede, ashamed to betray the weakness and vacillation of his mind. Lady Adelaide had thanked him, — Gerald warmly echoed her thanks; while Moorsom and the St. Pauls,

who were to form part of the group, complimented him on his obligingness.

Early on the following morning, appeared Ottavio Sforza and the costumier, sketch and measures in hand, to equip the reserved Northamptonshire baronet to figure in a pageant, as the tenderest of poets and of lovers!

CHAPTER XVII.

Men are but children of a larger growth.

POPE.

WERE confirmation wanting to the truth of the poet's dictum, it might be found in the eagerness with which beings, self-styled rational, engage in the puppet-shows of fashionable life, —in tableaux, costumed-balls, and masquerades. The mummeries of morris-dancers of a fair or the Mayday gambols of a village, are comprehensible enough; for sweet must be the one day's holiday that has been prefaced by months of toil and self-denial. But the pageantry which

enables the rich and idle to array their manhood in velvet and brocade, instead of Irish linen and broadcloth, is the spontaneous ebullition of human weakness.

For a whole week preceding poor Mr. Longman-Tompkinson's gala, the gay world of Naples was in a fever of frivolity. The Neapolitans, self-secure of the superiority of their taste, already triumphed by anticipation over the gorgeous vulgarity of the Great British; prepared to oppose to diamond-laden sultanas and blazing Queen Elizabeths, the exquisite impersonation of some of the *chef d'œuvres* of their schools of art; while the sweet simplicity of the Darling Misses and their kind, laboured diligently in getting up in the strictest secrecy certain Bearnaise and Spanish costumes, protesting, to each other every time they met, their intention to appear in "a *thimple* ball dress."

Even the most fastidious did not affect to exempt themselves from the reigning epidemy; and it was known that Lady Wycombe had not only vouchsafed a promise to the Tompkinsons, but was preparing for a sensation. She, too, had her group; and as young Harford was included in it as well as her established adherent Alexis Bagot, there was reason to infer that Lord Portumna had also attached himself (either through excess of treason or excess of confederacy) to the train of the rival of Lady Adelaide.

However vexed in the first instance to find himself involved in such a display, however conscious that he was about to figure in a pastime the report of which would draw upon him the animadversions of his sober friends in England, Sir William soon became interested in the details and progress of the preparations. Scarcely a morning passed, but it was necessary for the little party to assemble at the

Palazzo Balbi, to canvass the admission of some new member, or some variation of grouping. The costumier of San Carlos was in frequent attendance; and the cares of poor Mrs Longman-Tompkinson,—who, half out of her wits for joy at the *éclat* with which she had environed herself, flew from house to house to keep up the excitement and spur the flagging zeal of her constituents,—seemed almost superfluous. In vain did she whisper that she had hopes of an *incognito* visit from the king and queen; and that Prince Charles and Prince Leopold had announced their royal intention of breaking through royal custom and appearing in character:—it was with their own costumes and power of conquest, that each was severally occupied. They cared as little whether Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson had agreed to expend a few hundred guineas more than the Schrams upon the decorations of her suite of apartments, as whe-

ther the Schrams were to exceed the Tompkinsons in the number of their dozens of dozens of Champagne.

The day, the night arrived, preceded by six nights and days of anxious vigil for the English housekeeper and Italian *maître d'hôtel.* All that British gold and Neapolitan taste could supply was in preparation for the five hundred expected and expectant guests; and at the appointed hour, Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson, radiant in smiles and a diamond tiara, took her station of triumph at the door.

Unluckily, the day selected for the fête was that of the arrival of the courier; and it happened that among the letters placed in the hands of Sir William Helmsley was one which he felt ought to prevent him from joining the festivities of the evening. Not, indeed, as a matter of feeling; for the relative whose dangerous illness was announced in a mere letter of neighbourly

civility from his prosy friend De Ligne, was a man who had never shown him, and consequently never merited in return, one gleam of kinsmanly affection. Still, the blood of one of his parents flowed in the veins of Lord Shropshire; and Sir William was not yet so callous to the opinions of society, as to defy the ceremonies of its exaction. He *knew* that it was his business to give up the ball,—to disappoint Lady Adelaide,—and vex and mortify the Tompkinsons and their guests; but he *felt* that the sacrifice was impossible.

Wroughton, who was absent when the letters were brought in, had no officious correspondent to corroborate the report of Mr. De Ligne; and it was unlikely that any other person in Naples should have received intimation of the fact. It was not for Helmsley to circulate the rumour. No one need know a word of the matter. After

locking De Ligne's letter into his writing-desk, he determined to go to the ball!

And how could he do otherwise than exult in his determination, when, on arriving at the Palazzo Balbi, he beheld Lady Adelaide de Vere, to whom the elegant lightness of her costume imparted an almost girlish air of simplicity. The robe of pale straw colour, bodiced with violet-coloured velvet, the slight gauze hanging sleeves looped up to display the symmetrical beauty of her ungloved hands,—the hair bound over her forehead, its braids half escaping from the net of gold and pearls so often described by her poet and lover,—all was in strict accordance with the descriptions of Petrarch and the portrait of the Stradalla gallery. Lady Adelaide, slightly embarrassed, perhaps by the novelty of her position, looked paler and more delicately lovely than ever: and

when Sir William, arrayed in his simple white tunic and crowned with the laurels of the capitol, approached to offer her his hand, her eyes involuntarily cast down to veil her confusion completing her resemblance to the well-known picture of Laura de Sades,—so perfect was the illusion that Sforza, Guastalla, the Duchess d'Asti, Princess Stradalla, and all the other Italians present, burst into irrepressible demonstrations of rapture and applause.

It was remarkable that all the other English destined to form part of the eventful group, were attempting to disguise their *mauvaise honte*, by laughing at themselves or each other,—by affected buffoonery and clumsy irony. Even Gerald, who personated Boccaccio, was pretending to throw himself into attitudes at the feet of Mrs. St. Paul, while old Moorsom assumed the solemnity of demeanour becoming the Sacred College. But Petrarch and Laura were

apparently mutually engrossed. They had no eyes but for each other.

It was time to set off. Arrived at the Palazzo Stradalla, a legion of sbirri and a few scattered horseguards announced as intelligibly as the illuminated portal, that a fête was toward and royalty expected. The grand staircase, usually so Italianly filthy, was carpeted and adorned with flowering shrubs; the antechambers were crowded with the powdered lackeys of the Tompkinsons, glittering in the flaming plush and broadcloth of the family-liveries. In the hall below, was stationed the military band of the royal guard; and from the saloons within, breathed the softer strains of a well-ordered orchestra.

Lady Adelaide and her party had agreed to appear early in the evening, that a prominent station might be assigned to their group previous to the arrival of the Princes. Yet, early

as it was, the same especial invitation had been extended to so many, that the grand gallery was already nearly full. At the entrance stood Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson, diving and diving in a perpetual succession of curtseys, all affability to her equals, all servility to her superiors; a forest of diamond sprays nodding and quivering upon her head, and scarcely an inch of her person or attire undecorated with jewels. She looked like the idol of Loretto, twitched and agitated by the vivifying influence of a galvanic battery. The best of fine ladies is at best a frivolous thing; but a *vulgar*, would-be fine lady is vexatious as well as frivolous, and altogether insupportable.

Then there was the frigid Lady Darling, the lady "with a right sense of things," magnificently attired as Joanna, queen of Naples; while her daughters, calling themselves Minna and Brenda, were draperied after the fashion of two

Ossianic nymphs. Lady Mary Mitchell's youngest girl, who resembled a white mouse in size and complexion, kept running about, squeaking to her English friends,—"Am I not a famous figure?—I'm a brigand's wife!—Look at my stiletto,—look at my pistols,—look at my coral *agnus Dei!*—An't I a capital brigand's wife?"—Her elder sister, whose somewhat more *éveillé* countenance had braved the Almacks of twelve seasons, and was now making the tour of Europe for the same purpose that Whittington's cat made its voyage, to be disposed of to the highest bidder, had disguised her audacity under a quaker's cap; while their mamma, the roundabout Lady Mary, sinking under a train of threadbare black velvet and a *coif à la* Anne Boleyn, was compared by Alexis Bagot to a *pâté de foie gras* covered with a parish pall, or the Heidelberg ton in mourning for its grandfather.

The "Trionfo di Petrarca," meanwhile, was welcomed with rapture by the Italian portion of the assembly. Lady Wycombe and her party, attired as the personages of "Waverley," had already enjoyed their tribute of admiration, and were mingling with the crowd. But Lady Adelaide was a being apart. Lady Adelaide was one of those lovely wonders of too rare occurrence to be regarded at any moment with a careless eye. To the charm of beauty the Italians are almost as susceptible as to that of music. They could not pay sufficient homage to a Laura yielded by the pale regions of the North, to dispute the palm of loveliness with the traditional idol of their favourite minstrel.

In spite of himself, Helmsley was not only pleased by the success of their masquing, but deeply gratified to witness the deference with which his fair companion was complimented by the leading personages of Naples. Attracted

by the prospect of so brilliant a fête, all that was distinguished in society was assembled under the roof of "Ladi Tomkin;"—courtiers, ministers, diplomats,—civil and military.

"At least," thought Sir William, "whatever may be the liberty of tongue assumed by Horton or Bagot towards her, the influence of Lady Adelaide is honourably admitted by men, ay, and by women, as much their superiors in rank and station as in sense and candour."

He was enchanted by the exquisite elegance of her address,—by the accomplishment of her mind. She spoke French, Italian, German, as fluently as her native tongue; and was as perfectly at home in her replies to the pedantic compliments of Berio and the courtly jargon of the Duchess d'Ascoli, as when bowing off the provincial over-civility of Sir James Darling.

But when the whole sunshine of that radiant countenance was turned upon himself, Helmsley

lost all power of discrimination! He scarcely understood what words proceeded from lips that seemed too expressively beautiful for the utterance of any ordinary sentiment.

The ball commenced; but Lady Adelaide would not dance. Though most of the groups which had been formed for tableaux were broken up, Laura and Petrarca seemed destined to remain together. Mrs. St. Paul accepted the offered hand of her Boccaccio and took her place in a quadrille, amid a judicious mixture of Greeks and Turks, Russians and Persians, quakers and lady abbesses; but Lady Adelaide having declined to waltz with Prince Leopold of Syracuse on the plea of indisposition, appeared to have appropriated to herself the attendance of the far from reluctant Helmsley.

As they were sitting together, however, at one extremity of the gallery, now comparatively deserted for the gay spectacle of the ball-room, she

suddenly rose, observing, "I saw my father pass into the tribune, where I rather think there are card-tables. Perhaps you will take me to him that I may release you from captivity. The ball-room is too oppressive for me; and you must not lose the gayest part of the spectacle."

"If you grudge me the perfect happiness I am enjoying here," replied Sir William, "I will certainly go in search of Lord Colebrooke. But I have as little inclination as yourself to encounter the atmosphere of the ball-room."

"At least, let us move from hence," said Madonna Laura, in a lower voice, glancing towards one end of the gallery, where sat the Grosvenor Square countess, conversing as Flora Mc Ivor with a Baron of Bradwardine in whom Sir William detected his friend Sir Raymond Horton,—"that man is my evil genius!"

"I am sorry to hear such an accusation against one of my earliest acquaintances. Do not, however, let him drive us away from this cool, quiet retreat. I will answer for preserving you to-night from the influence of his spells!" continued Helmsley, with a smile.

"You cannot answer for securing me against the scandals and misinterpretations which Lady Wycombe will not only create out of our being seen here together, but despatch to London, by to-morrow's courier, for the annotations of all the dowagers in May Fair!"

"What could the most scandal-loving synod of old women whose breath outvenoms all the worms of Nile, find to comment upon, in the fact that Lady Adelaide de Vere condescended to accept for an hour or two, at a crowded fête, the protection of her future brother-in-law?" said Helmsley, with awakened spirit.

"Brother-in-law?" reiterated Lady Adelaide,

turning towards him a countenance wearing the expression of unequivocal amazement.

"Pardon me!" said Helmsley, conscious of the indiscretion of his frankness. "I am perhaps too presumptuous in anticipating for Gerald a happiness to which he may not yet have found courage to aspire. Overlook my offence; and conclude that I am only judging the case as it will be judged by at least one half the persons assembled here to-night."

"Do you mean me to understand," said Lady Adelaide, evidently struggling with some secret emotion, "that I am generally supposed to be engaged to Mr. Wroughton?"

"Not engaged," replied Sir William, still more and more embarrassed.

"Likely, then, to be engaged,—desirous to be engaged,—attached,—what term can I use to persuade you to be frank with me!" cried Lady Adelaide, with genuine earnestness.

"You have a right to command my frankness after my unpardonable indiscretion," said Helmsley. "You have a right to know that the world here imagines Gerald Wroughton to be deeply attached to Lady Adelaide de Vere; and that at no distant period, it will lie at her disposal to render him the happiest or most miserable of men."

Lady Adelaide started, and was for a moment silent. "I know not why I should feel surprised or displeased at all this," she observed at length. "I have lived long enough to be aware that there is no limit to the absurd surmises of society, particularly in such an unincidental place as Naples, where there is so little scandal to engross the interest of my countrypeople."

"Is there any thing particularly absurd," said Sir William, almost seriously, "in attributing to a beautiful woman supreme influence

over the feelings of a disengaged man,—young, free,—handsome,—rich,—in a position to look upon marriage as the crowning happiness of his prosperous destiny?"

"I spoke not with reference to your brother-in-law, I spoke selfishly. It is, I think, absurd to imagine that a woman who has suffered so bitterly as I have done from the consequences of an ill-advised marriage, would, in the more matured season of her experience, be tempted into a union with a man several years her junior in age,—in *character* a hundred!"

It was now Sir William Helmsley's turn to start. "Am I to understand, then, that you would reject a proposal of marriage from Gerald Wroughton?"—

"I know not by what right you interrogate me on so delicate a point," replied Lady Adelaide, restored to composure and attempting to resume her smiles.

"May I at least be permitted to inquire," persisted Sir William, "whether, throughout your intimacy with this young man,—this boy,—(for he *was* a boy when first he became submitted to your influence,)— you never surmised, you never *felt* the extent of your power over his feelings?"—

"If the extent be such as you would infer,—*never!* I was aware that he preferred the society of our house to that of any other in Naples,—which (to render my father justice) is not very wonderful."

"You imagined that he was attracted to the Palazzo Balbi, by the charm of Lord Colebrooke's conversation?"—

"In some measure, but not solely. I concluded I had my share in the attraction. I have known Mr. Wroughton intimately for years. When first he was presented to us by our valued friend Dr. Moorsom, he was, as you

just now remarked, a mere boy,—a sickly, dying boy. How could we do otherwise than interest ourselves in the fate of a young countryman, exiled from home, and under circumstances so truly dispiriting?—I was at that period scarcely recovered from the anguish, so torturing to a woman of decent feeling, of being exposed to the coarse raillery of a court of law,—the coarse comments of the public journals. I was then less cheerful, and our house less brilliant than now; and to its domestic fireside Gerald was welcomed, by my father as a son,—by myself as a brother.—He quitted Naples. We heard no more of him. We expected to hear no more of him. We knew that he was by no means our far-distant neighbour in Northamptonshire; yet intimate as had been our friendship in Italy, he deigned not even to make the common inquiries of courtesy after my father. How could I suppose that one so

cold and graceless, was cherishing towards me the tenderness of a lover?"—

Lady Adelaide paused for a reply; but Helmsley had not presence of mind to utter a syllable.

"At length, casual report acquainted us," continued the lovely Laura, "of the family distresses which, naturally enough, were estranging the mind of Gerald Wroughton from his friends. We grieved for him, for through *him* we had learned to feel familiar with the unknown members of his family; to respect his brother and guardian,—to admire and love that guardian's angelic wife. We pitied, therefore, and forgave our truant friend."

"You were indeed indulgently forgiving!" exclaimed Sir William; "since, on his arrival here this winter, you received him again and with the same familiar confidence into your circle!"

"Sufficient evidence, were proof wanting, that he was regarded as a mere acquaintance both by my father and myself!—It is easy to forgive the fault of an indifferent person; while the ingratitude of those we *love* is an unpardonable offence!"

"Am I plainly to conclude, then,"—cried Helmsley, accelerating his explanations on perceiving that, a supper-room having been opened at the lower extremity of the gallery, the crowd of dancers was hurrying forward so as to render conversation or confidence impossible;—"am I to conclude that my brother is without hope of—"

"Lady Adelaide—Lady Adelaide de Vere—my dear Lady Adelaide!—I have been looking for you in all directions!"—panted Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson. "There's the Prince of Capua waiting to take me in to supper, and I can't lay my hand on Lady Wycombe (who,

I suppose, is somewhere or other with Lord Portumna) to take the arm of Prince Leopold. So do pray be so obliging as——Stay!—he's here close behind me!"—And before the Longman-Tompkinson could complete her harangue, or Lady Adelaide de Vere refuse or consent, the embroidered arm of Neapolitan royalty was extended towards her; she was compelled to follow, led by the Prince of Syracuse, the nodding diamond sprays of her elated hostess; and Petrarca was left to follow, with the unpoetical throng, or go poetically supperless to bed!—

CHAPTER XVIII.

One prospect lost, another still we gain;
And not a vanity is given in vain.

POPE.

THE triumph reflected upon Sir William while escorting through the enthusiastic throng the queen of the night, had alas! produced an intoxicating effect on his usually sober senses. It would have been indeed difficult to remain insensible to the homage lavished from all sides on the lovely Laura!—Wherever they turned, exclamations in all languages greeted his ear, of "How lovely!"—"How elegant!"—"How

enchanting!"—"What a handsome couple!" "They seem made for each other!"—

In the illusion of the moment, Sir William was almost tempted to echo this flattering sentiment; which, when overheard by Lady Adelaide, brought so delicate a blush into her beauteous face. He felt that they *were* made for each other; and could scarcely restrain himself from pressing the graceful hand that rested in alabaster whiteness on his own.

But now that the glory of his momentary triumph was over,—now that he was forced to resign his place of honour to the heavy-headed Prince Leopold,—Helmsley was induced, by the sudden sense of dulness and bereavement that overpowered him, to a still higher sense of the honours he had enjoyed. What gratification, then, must await the vanity of the man to whom such triumphs would become of hourly recurrence; the man privileged to feel, when

thousands of admiring eyes were fixed upon that lovely being,—" She is mine—my own—my plighted love—my wedded wife!"

Thwarted and irritable, he had not patience to bestow his civilities upon any other woman present; but, separating himself from the motley throng pressing onwards to the banquet, wandered in an opposite direction through the farms they had deserted. When, lo! peeping into the ball-room from the furthest antechamber, in curious contrast with the snowy heads of Mrs. Longman-Tompkinson's over-powdered footmen, he discerned the black Brutus and anxious countenance of Ludovico, his courier. At the same moment, his own person attracted the notice of the servant; who, in spite of the efforts of the scarlet-plush brigade to restrain his intrusion, advanced boldly towards his master, with a letter in his hand;—a letter from England,—*a letter by express*,—a letter from

the confidential secretary of the dying Lord Shropshire!

"Is the carriage here?"—demanded the conscience-stricken baronet after receiving this explanation.

"*Si, eccelenza!*—at the door!" And without a moment's pause Sir William hurried home. The courier was waiting to see him; but the man's verbal communication was superfluous. "Lord Shropshire, though most unlikely to be still alive, had requested the immediate presence of his nephew—*of his heir.*"

Not an hour was to be lost. The intelligent Ludovico undertook every preparation for immediate departure. It would only be necessary to wait for the opening of the banking-house with which Sir William's letter of credit was deposited. His diplomatic passport required a single *visa* from the police; by nine o'clock the following morning, he might be on the road.

For a moment, Sir William hesitated whether

to return to the ball, to communicate to Gerald the necessity for his precipitate departure and take leave of a few chosen friends. But he felt that, under all the circumstances, he ought not to be seen at the fête; or rather, he felt conscious that his motives for the project were not altogether such as he was avowing to himself. In the course of an hour or two, Gerald must return home; when their adieus and mutual commissions would be easily exchanged.

It did not, of course, enter into the conjectures of Helmsley, that Wroughton would propose to bear him company. So hurried a journey as he should be forced to make, could not be otherwise than unnecessarily injurious to the delicate young man; nor was it likely that Gerald would be desirous to tear himself from the spot where the object of his affections had still a month to sojourn.

But there lay the real source of perplexity to

Sir William Helmsley!—Was he to leave poor Gerald cherishing expectations, the loss of which must prove so agonizing, without a word of warning—a word of admonition?—Yet, to what extent was he privileged in repeating the communications, or rather betraying the confidence, of Lady Adelaide?—How could he, in all the flurry of departure, hazard the sudden discussion of so delicate a subject?—

The effort was impossible! He felt that he had not courage to startle his brother, returning in all the gladsomeness of youthful gaiety from a ball-room, first with the tidings of his own abrupt departure, and secondly with the unprefaced declaration that he must give up all hope of Lady Adelaide de Vere! He would write. He would convey a slight hint in his first letter, and, gradually unfolding the truth, secure poor Gerald from the mortification of rejection.

Helmsley was fully confirmed in this deter-

mination, when at length Mr. Wroughton made his appearance. Elated by the excitement of the brilliant scene he had quitted, Gerald was in the highest spirits. His eyes sparkled, his cheeks were flushed with animation. He was evidently thrilling under the inspiration of love, and hope, and Laura!

"Well, my dear fellow!"—cried he, after listening to the incoherent explanations afforded by Sir William, "I must not grumble over an event which by this time has probably made you Lord Monthermer, with forty or fifty thousand a year; for though my own loss on the occasion is great, *your* gain is clearly greater. I will not even affect the pitiful hypocrisy of offering to bear you company; for were you to accept it, you would have little profit in a travelling companion whose heart and soul would be at Naples, and his body in your post-chaise."

Helmsley was silent.

"I know I can trust Ludovico to cater for you with comfort on your route; and to say the truth, I shall neither replace him nor the carriage. *You,* my dear Helmsley, will not pronounce me to be a coxcomb, if I own that I have the hope—the all but certainty—a certainty more than ever confirmed this very evening,—that I shall return to England an accepted lover; and when Lord Colebrooke finds me left alone here, he will probably offer me a place in his carriage."

"A certainty more than ever confirmed this very evening?"—involuntarily repeated Sir William.

"Ay—more than ever!—Do not ask me for particulars—do not compel me to confession. I fancy you give me credit for not being wholly an ass; and you may trust to my discrimination that I am safe,—approved by the father and beloved by ——"

Sir William started from his seat. This was too much for him. He felt that he was on the point of betraying himself. But in remaining silent, was he not betraying his brother-in-law?

"All, therefore, I have to entreat of you," continued Wroughton, attributing Helmsley's emotion to dissatisfaction at the prospect of the match,—"is, that you will try for my sake to overcome your own prejudices and those of poor dear Emma; and prepare to welcome my sweet wife into the family as a sister and friend. I am fully aware of your antipathy; but I am also aware you have too much kindness of heart to persist in harshness and injustice towards an innocent person."

It was fortunate for Helmsley that Ludovico at that moment entered the room with a bag of gold, the exchange for one of Hammersley's notes with which he had been intrusted by Sir William. Details of business were now to be

attended to. The hour of departure was at hand; and the doubts which a moment before had glanced into the mind of the new Lord Monthermer—"Is it myself, or is it Gerald she has been deceiving?"—was set aside by inquiries after cloaks and roadbooks, sandwich-boxes and air-pillows!

When morning dawned, Gerald retired to rest to dream of Laura de Sades, or Lady Adelaide Wroughton; and Lord Monthermer had reached Santa Agata, on his way to the enjoyments of Bridgnorth Castle and the revenues of an Italian sovereign.

CHAPTER XIX.

I have upon a rich and pleasant hill,
Feigned Fortune to be thron'd. Amongst the crowd,
Whose eyes are on the sovereign lady fix'd,
One do I personate, of Lord Timon's frame,
Whom fortune with her ivory hand wafts to her.

SHAKSPEARE.

HAD Lord Monthermer, in his hurried journey homewards, been morally the same individual who, five months before, as Sir William Helmsley, pursued the same road in an opposite direction, the self-communing, ensured by a fortnight spent in a solitary travelling-carriage, might have been productive of advantageous

results. But the *man* was as much altered as his name and station; and the conflict of those emotions to which he had unwittingly afforded shelter in his bosom, was rather stimulated than soothed by the undisturbed train of his reflections.

Sometimes, starting from his reveries, he would upbraid himself for having quitted Naples so abruptly, without a definite explanation with Gerald and Lady Adelaide. What was the motive of his haste in flying to England? To bury the dead. For it was scarcely within the scope of possibility that Lord Shropshire should still survive; and what claim had the senseless remains of his kinsman upon his assiduities, compared with the interests of his living, breathing, excellent, affectionate brother? He almost determined, on reaching Milan, when a letter was delivered to him addressed to "The Lord Monthermer" formally announcing the

decease of his uncle, to retrace his steps towards Naples. But what interpretation would be placed by the world on such manifest inconsistency?—What apology could he offer to society for leaving the obsequies of the deceased earl unsolemnized, and the interests of his own son unguarded?—No!—he must proceed!—With feverish lips he murmured aloud an ejaculation that it was now too late for interference; that time and fate must develop his own destinies and those of the two human beings who, saving his children, were dearest to him on earth.

It was scarcely possible for a man acceding to opulence and distinction from comparative obscurity, to regard with more complete indifference his auspicious change of fortunes. He no longer attempted to disguise from himself, that the humblest position in life cheered by the tenderness and brightened by the beauty of such a being as Adelaide de Vere, would be

more precious to him than the barren splendours with which he was henceforth to be environed. He felt that, though tidings of Gerald's rejection would imbitter his prosperity with feelings of pity and remorse, the realization of Gerald's presumptuous hopes, would render life a burden to himself.

The weather was mild and spring-like; the hill-sides were already clothed with verdure, and the meads variegated with flowers. All was in accordance with the spirit of his dawning prospects. Yet scarcely for a moment were the reflections of the bewildered man directed towards either the pleasures or duties that awaited him. He thought not of the princely halls and parks and forests of Bridgnorth,—the home of his mother's youth,—the home of his son's maturity. His fancy wandered only to the purple coasts he was abandoning,—to the budding gardens of Villa Reale,

—to the shrubby steeps of Pozzuoli,—to the fragrant atmosphere of enervate and enervating Italy!—

Arrived at Dovor, and persecuted into a recognition of his newly-acquired importance by the obsequiousness of mine host of the Ship, the London newspapers which were placed in his hands during a hurried breakfast, informed him that "The body of the late Earl of Shropshire was lying in state in his mansion in Grosvenor Square, till the arrival of his lordship's nephew and heir Lord Monthermer, who was hourly expected in town from the continent."

Another journal acquainted him that he was in his twenty-ninth year; a young man of prepossessing appearance and high accomplishments; who had distinguished himself by the attainment of honours at Oxford, and was likely to acquire distinction in the upper house.

A third (and these tidings were, perhaps, the most welcome of the three) stated that "preparations were making at his mansion in Grosvenor Square, for the arrival of Lord Monthermer, who was to reach town on Tuesday next."

For once, indeed, the papers spoke truth. On that very Tuesday evening, four smoking posters drew up before the lordly mansion in Grosvenor Square whose doors had never before unclosed to afford him a cordial welcome; and whose half-closed shutters now announced to the world, that the dust of the Earl, its late owner, lay coffined within, in all the pride and pomp of crimson velvet and circumstance of gilt cherubim and nails.

On the following morning, a gorgeous achievement appended to the façade of the house, proclaimed that even the dust was departed. The funeral was on its slow way into Northamptonshire; Lord Monthermer having pre-

ceded it, to be in waiting at Bridgnorth Castle for the mournful procession.

After the ruggedness of continental landscape, how rich now appeared to his eyes the green and timber-fenced pastures of England! how Tempe-like those noble parks, set aside for centuries from the common earth, to recreate the mighty ones of mankind with their velvet sward, their groves, their glens, their glorious alternation of hill and valley!—Lord Monthermer entered the magnificent domain of Bridgnorth Castle, as the evening sun was streaming in golden lustre over its hanging woods, its abounding river and foaming cascades; and the nobleness of the scenery, and the lofty mansion by which it was dominated, seemed to strike him with all the force of novelty.

But no feeling of personal elation mingled with his delight. Expectation of future inheritance had been so remote from his mind,

and the untimely death of his young cousin was still so recent, that no time had been afforded for surmises respecting the ultimate disposal of the property. Up to the moment of receiving the letter from his man of business, he felt persuaded that the earl would marry again; and events had since succeeded each other so rapidly, and fallen upon a mind so thoroughly pre-engrossed, that all appeared a dream. He approached Bridgnorth Castle as if still coming to pay his cold respects to the kinsman, who was no longer there to welcome him or to repulse.

It was well for the new lord that a sense of fatigue after his recent exertions, superseded for the time every other sensation; and that he was able to sleep away his first twelve hours of desolate autocracy. In spite of the throng of servants which poured forth to offer their compliments of condolence and allegiance, no-

thing could exceed the dreariness of the vast mansion; of which, till Lord Shropshire was deposited in the grave, Lord Monthermer could not feel himself altogether lord and master. It seemed to his disordered faculties (still unrefreshed by repose), as if the blaze of light and display of plate, costly viands, and generous wines, were prepared as a feast of mock- to the absent one, not yet united to the dead, though so fearfully *dis*-united from the living.

The following morning, however, some relief was afforded to the loneliness of the dispirited though not afflicted heir, by a visit from the rector of Bridgnorth (the chaplain of the late earl), and the arrival from town of the family solicitor and auditor of the estates. The will of the deceased was now formally read; bequeathing all and every thing to the heir-at-law, with the exception of a legacy of a thousand

pounds to his friend Lord Colebrooke, and a few bequests to old servants and dependants. The only person who listened with a careless ear to the enumeration of family property, inserted probably by the manufacturers and reciters of the will for the purpose of multiplying its skins of parchment, was Lord Monthermer; who was roused from the reverie into which he had fallen during the recapitulation by a hearty shake of the hand from the gratulating rector, who had not yet learned to approach with the obsequiousness due to a right honourable patron, the young man he had so often heard reviled by the late earl as "that ass, my nephew William Helmsley."

Lord Monthermer had sufficient command over himself to offer his thanks to the three grave elders who expressed such disinterested satisfaction in his good fortune; and to invite them to assist in doing to each other the ho-

nours of a house in which at present he still felt himself an alien.

There was nothing *very* appalling in the prospect of the duties of life he was called upon to discharge; for his three guests were unanimous in asserting over their third bottle of claret, that the loss of the late lamented earl would be severely felt in the parish, the county, and the country. Dr. Drumstrum humbly suggested that, in consequence of Lord Monthermer's absence from England, he had ventured to anticipate his wishes by ordering decent mourning for the children of the two schools founded by his late generous patron, to appear at the funeral of their benefactor, as well as for the elderly women and infirm men, pensioners of the Bridgnorth almshouses. Mr. Screw, the auditor stated that he had taken upon himself to bespeak scarves and hatbands for three hundred tenants, who were desirous to pay the

last respect to the most liberal of landlords (after which a handsome entertainment must necessarily be afforded them at the castle); while Mr. Cognovit acquainted his lordship that his two partners and head-clerk, as well as the architect, apothecary, wine-merchant, and silversmith of the lamented peer, had signified their intention of gracing his honoured obsequies on the morrow; the distance from town being nothing in comparison with their zeal in the service of so amiable and generous an employer.

After listening to these announcements, and a few more flourishes of a similar nature, Lord Monthermer began to be almost persuaded that the poor and the people had really lost a friend; and that, though a heartless libertine in the private relations of life, his uncle had been unblemished in the discharge of his public duties. The county papers designated him "our late

esteemed and lamented Lord-lieutenant,"—the metropolitan journals, "that worthy and distinguished man, the late Earl of Shropshire;" and, oppressed by the weight of all these testimonials to his merit, his nephew began to feel that he was scarcely worthy of laying at the feet of royalty the badge and ribbon of so excellent a predecessor, as the man who had devoted a third of his life to whist,—which third was, perhaps, the least objectionable part of his mortal career.

END OF VOL. I.

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